

JULY

25 CENTS

BLUE BOOK

Stories of adventure for MEN, by MEN



So Gallantly Streaming

A night that lives immortal in our history forms the backdrop for this fine story

by **H. BEDFORD-JONES**

•

POOCH—

and Sundry Other People

A novel by **JOHN T. MCINTYRE**

•

**The Murder at
Recluse House**

A complete novel

by **PHILIP WYLIE**

Who's Who *in this* Issue

Alexander Poliakov

ALEXANDER POLIAKOV, from whose book "White Mammoths" we reprint several chapters (beginning page 68), was reported killed in action October 3rd, 1942. He was thirty-four years old.

Son of a railway repair worker, Poliakov was born in the Voronezh region, scene of bitter fighting between the Soviet and German Armies. After working three years on a Soviet farm, he entered the Moscow Artillery School in 1927 and was graduated in 1931. The next year he entered the Sverdlov Communist University in Moscow, from which he was graduated in 1935: Two years later he became a reporter for the Red Army organ *Red Star*, serving as its war correspondent during the Soviet-Finnish war in 1939. He received the Order of the Red Banner for his work at the front.

In August, 1940, he was made a battalion commissar in the Red Army, continuing as *Red Star* correspondent at the same time. At the outbreak of the Soviet-German war he was a combination soldier and war correspondent at the front.

During the first month of the war the unit to which he was attached was cut off from the main Russian Army and surrounded by the Germans. The story of the unit's break through the German lines to rejoin the main Soviet Army was recorded by the correspondent in "Russians Don't Surrender." The author was wounded during these military operations and again received the Order of the Red Banner.



Soveto

Philip Wylie

PHILIP WYLIE was born in Beverly, Massachusetts, in 1902, the son of the Rev. Dr. Edmund M. Wylie. He began his formal writing career when, at the age of twelve, a poem of his was accepted for publication in a Presbyterian periodical, the *Continent*. During his last year in high school he wrote voluminously, and when he entered Princeton, he became a regular contributor to the *Daily Princetonian*. In his sophomore year a small volume of his poems, "Dormitory Ditties," was privately printed by the Princeton University Press. After he left college, he held various positions, finally becoming press-agent for the *New Yorker* in the days of its infancy. Later he held several editorial positions on the magazine, all the while being a frequent contributor to its pages as well as to those of other magazines. In 1927, he wrote his first novel, "Heavy Laden," which was greeted with much enthusiasm. Since then he has written many others; our readers will remember with pleasure his collaborations with Edwin Balmer "When Worlds Collide" and "After Worlds Collide;" and he has written for almost every magazine of importance. Recently he has been writing a series of deep-sea fishing stories for *The Saturday Evening Post*.

He now lives in Miami and he is an enthusiastic fisherman.



Durand Kiefer

IN 1924, when I was in high school in Port Huron, Michigan, my father asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I said, "A sailor," for he'd practically raised me in small sail-boats from the age of six. . . . I was graduated from Annapolis in 1930, and spent the next ten years at sea, from China and the Philippines to Europe and South America, in almost all types of men-of-war. Stomach trouble beached me in 1940 after an unsuccessful operation aboard a destroyer-tender in Chefoo, China.

My specialty was gunnery, particularly the three-inch nondirector-controlled AA battery, but I got the biggest kick out of commanding one of the old Indian-class tugs on a winter relief expedition to the Kanaga Island, now in no-man's land between Kiska and the Andreanofs. A close second was the few dives I made in submarines, which I rode at every opportunity but never served in. I took to writing fiction upon retirement in 1941, and find it more exacting but more satisfying than sailing. Now back in uniform for the duration, I find little time for writing.



BLUE BOOK

July, 1943

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Except for stories of Real Experiences, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

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READERS' COMMENT

ABOARD A COAST GUARD SHIP

There is always a copy of BLUE BOOK aboard my ship, and I am continually amazed at fellows off watch who curl up and read it—while there are sometimes subs below and enemy aircraft above. It's a form of pleasant escape, I guess, for I often do it myself. I've been yanked back from all over the world—mentally—which is a tribute to the authors.

If any of your writers send in a story of the fighting Coast Guard, please print it. We are fighting all over the world in the most dangerous jobs, but don't get much credit for it from the laymen. When we take in ten attack-boats, we figure four will return; how's that for odds?

W. L. Rhodes, U.S.C.G.(R),
Greenfield, Mass.

REVIVE THE TRUMPETS?

Congratulations on a magazine without advertising. I don't see how you do it—but I hope you do so, at least so long as I live. My subscription goes in for two years at a time, so you see I appreciate your efforts.

When will you, or is the time gone when you will, have another series of "Trumpets from Oblivion"? Was not that the series of stories in which were shown, before the eyes of today's people, events of long ago? They were what made me a BLUE BOOK fan.

The copies, when read, go to a soldier lad at Fort McClellan. I presume other boys get a chance at them.

A. G. Odell, M. D.,
Clifton Springs, N. Y.

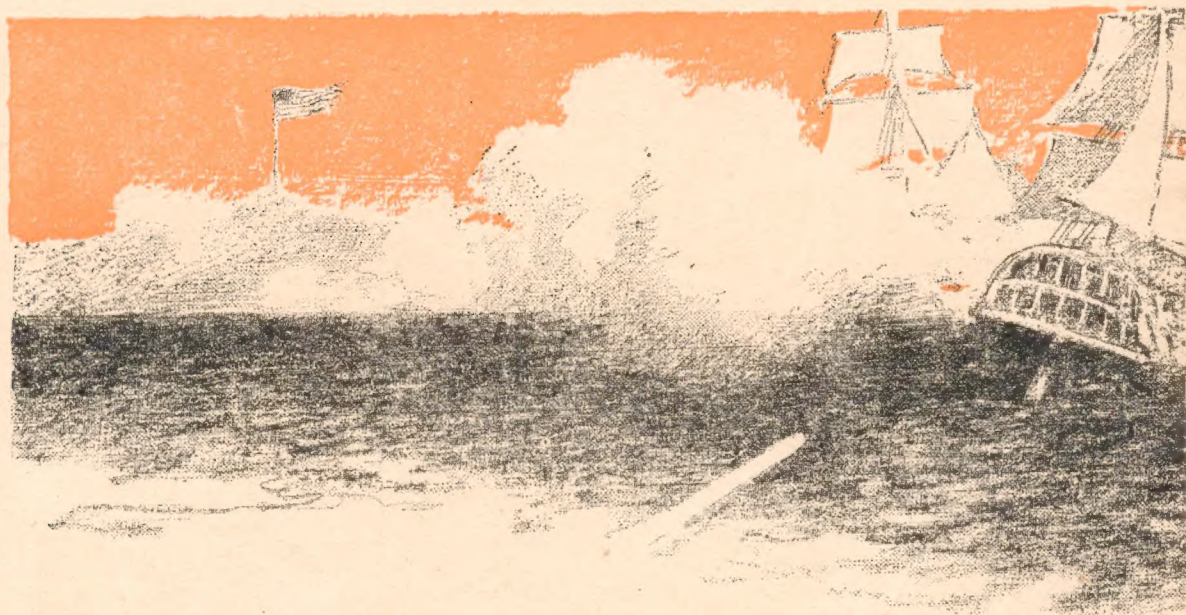
MORE REASONABILITUDITY?

An inventulator truly marvelous! He has inventulated a pair of fourceps that will reach into the fourth dimension! I repeat—marvelful! But please! Isn't it asking a bit much of us to believe that such a "fourceps" which goes through three-dimensional matter can still grasp a three-dimensional object and withdraw said T. D. O. back through said T. D. M.? Or does this magic gadget have the added power to "fourth-dimensionalize" that which it touches?

At any rate, Mr. Nelson Bond's "Miracular and Importulant" is a good story, with a nice, quaint character, and I'd like to see more stories concerning our hero, but with a bit more reasonability of plot.

Critisizally, but still enthusiastic,
Monte MacConnell,
McLean, Virginia.

So Gallantly



Flags of our Fathers—XII

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

IT was a chill, windy spring night in the west of England. The old man sat before a ruddy, grateful blaze while oak-branches scraped roof and shutters in the howl of wind. From the table, a silver candelabrum lit the harsh, dominant profile, with shaggy gray brows and bitter eyes. Pipes, decanter, glasses, lay forgotten on the table.

The old man broke the seal of a thick packet. He had the air of one performing a stern, unpleasant task with flinty resolve; his very silence was grim and ominous. A most uncompromising old man, one would say—the type who was accustomed to mastery, brooking no advice nor opposition.

He tore open a short letter addressed to Lord James Trelawny, Trelawny Hall, Devon, and held it to the light. It read:

My Lord:

It is with mingled emotions that I address you. As an old family friend, I am aware of what your feelings must be. I have received the resigna-

tion of your nephew and heir, the Honorable Charles Trelawny, from His Majesty's service with great regret. Any comment thereon is so far removed from my poor abilities as to be quite inadequate. Therefore I beg to commend to Your Lordship's attention the enclosed statement, confided to my care by Lieutenant Trelawny before carrying his decision into effect.

I have the honor to be, with great respect, Sir

Your most obedient humble servant
George Cockburn.

The old man lifted his head, hawk-like.

"Sir George Cockburn, Rear Admiral, Baronet, damned fool, impetuous gallant fellow, who went to sea at nine and has learned nothing since!" he murmured scathingly. "Apparently he sympathizes with the desire of my graceless nephew to turn himself into a red Indian. Bah! The whole world's gone mad!"

He crumpled the letter and shot it into the fire. He caught up the packet

from his lap and was about to toss it after the letter, unread, when some scruple must have stayed him. Lips grimly compressed, he smoothed out the folded sheets.

The topmost bore the heading:
STATEMENT OF CHARLES TRELAWNY.

A sneer in his angry eyes, the old man scanned the opening sentences.

These pages are writ in the earnest endeavor to present, as they touched me, certain incidents transpiring in August and September, in this year of our Lord 1814. My petty adventures are of no moment, but I do think that Mr. Key's song and the words of General Washington may be things of such import as to interest even my good uncle, whose angry bark so ill matches his shrewd perception and heart of gold.

Again, with a sniff, the old man made as though to toss the whole thing into the blaze, and again checked himself.

"Washington—a rebel general!" he ejaculated. "But, I admit, a demned

Streaming



good one. Some unknown poet, who writes a song—God save the mark! Fit company for a Royal Navy lieutenant turned lunatic!"

He reached out to the table, filled a long churchwarden clay pipe from the jar of tobacco, reached it to a candle-flame and puffed it alight, poured ruby port into a glass, then

grunted and settled himself in his chair.

Once more he began reading, this time without a break. The story of his nephew, who wrote as Lieutenant Charles Trelawny, R.N., made no attempt at artistry. Like an Admiralty report, it pitched straight into what it had to say and indulged no fanciful promptings. If at times enthusiasm

*Illustrated by
Maurice Bower*

*Mistress Anne,
was a merry
laughing angel,
the discovery of
a life-time.*



got the better of Trelawny's cool reserve, no damage was done. Trelawny had commanded one of the detachments of Marines, with the forces that had just burned Washington. He opened his statement with the retreat to the fleet:

A SORRY shameful business it was, and the farther it went the worse it got. The country militia made us trouble, and our own men made more. Some of them, against orders, were plundering the countryside, and a crusty old medico named Beanes clapped them into jail. Word reached us, and Sir George sent back a force to rescue the men and fetch Beanes to the fleet, vowing to hang him. Everything stemmed from this incident, because I was with this force.

Whenever he gets ashore, a sailor makes for horseback. I was no exception, and had secured a looted mount, a fine spirited animal. Beanes was captured; the men were freed; and on our way back we had a brush with the American militia. Some fool fired a musket under my horse's nose, and off he went, taking me with him, in a mad dash across fields and over fences. I hung on for dear life, furious but helpless

Today I may well bless that horse, but I certainly cursed him then, for he carried me slap through the American lines, with muskets blazing away on all sides. In trying to hang on, I dug my spurs into him, unwittingly, and made a bad matter worse. My last memory was of a fence and a ditch. A nearly spent musket-ball plowed through my scalp, which closed the wretched business.

When I wakened to life, I was in the ditch, and a grinning American sat looking at me over a huge horse-pistol. He was a young fellow of my own age, of a pleasant countenance; indeed, he had clapped a bandage about my bleeding head.

"You're my prisoner," said he, "far back of our lines. Must I blow out your brains?"

"I've none to blow out," I replied. "Damn that horse!"

He fell to laughing. "A Royal Navy man, by your cut," he said. "Give me your parole, and I'll save my powder. My name's Ted Fletcher, captain of militia."

What with the wound and a bad shaking-up, not to mention the mud of the ditch that had slathered me from head to foot, I was a miserable

object. I gave him my name and my parole, and we were friends on the instant. He pulled me out of the mud, shared with me a packet of food he had, and we discussed the situation.

"We're well on the Baltimore road now," said he. "Tell you what, Trelawny: suppose we go back to town. I'll take you to our house; my father is a West India merchant. Colonel Skinner, the government agent in charge of exchanging prisoners, is a friend of ours, and you'll be saved a lot of unpleasantness. And I'll have the credit of bringing in a naval officer. Yes or no?"

"Done with you," I said, and off we started.

The mud had left mighty little of my uniform, and that sorry Washington raid had left little of my pride. The roads were thronged with militia and farmers, and Fletcher once or twice had to explain that he was taking in a prisoner, but we were not molested. He was well known, I gathered, and I realized that I was truly fortunate in my captor.

EVENING fell before we trudged into the city outskirts. It was the last week in August, and uncomfortably warm. I had taken a liking to Fletcher, and he to me.

"I'm surprised that any of you haughty Britishers can prove so decent a chap," he said, a twinkle in his eyes. "Are you one of the crowd that burned Washington?"

"I'm no more proud of it than you are," said I. "If your forces had put up a fight instead of going into panic, it would not have happened. They'd have whipped us."

"And if your lobster-backs hadn't cut and run for your ships in a hurry," he replied, "we'd have killed the whole lot of you."

We looked at each other and laughed, and that ended the exchange of pleasantries.

By the time we reached his house, which was a noble building in Albemarle Street, I was staggering and he had to hold me up. He walked me into a handsome dining-room, where his family were at dinner, amid loud exclamations from Negro slaves and the ladies. His father was a grave, handsome man of fifty, his mother a sweet lady, and most capable, and his sister Anne had eyes like two stars. Fletcher went at the business briskly.

"This is Lieutenant Charles Trelawny of the Royal Navy," said he, "my prisoner on parole, and he's as badly hurt as he looks. I'm stowing him in my room, and we'd better get Doctor Jacobs to see to him. Does that suit you, Mother?"

"If it pleases thee, son," said the lady. She was, I gathered, a Quaker. She came up to me and gave me her

hand. "Welcome, sir, and I trust we shall make thee comfortable."

That is all I remember; it was truly astonishing. Fletcher and a black slave took me upstairs and put me to bed, and later a medico came and bled me and left a nasty draught, and I went to sleep. My bruises were worse than my head-wound, and that accursed saddle had left me so galled as to take all the briskness out of me.

MORNING came bright and sunny. A black servant, a splendid fellow who had been all his life in the family, brought me a tray, and when I insisted on rising, laid out some of "Master Theodore's" clothes, which fitted passably. My uniform had been sent off to be cleaned and mended. Sambo helped me dress and shave, and then showed me the way to the garden, where I would find Mistress Anne, or Missy Anne as he called her.

Find her I did, and it was as if I had found the whole round world with her, the discovery of a lifetime. She was a merry laughing angel. Presently her mother came and chided her for showing mirth at my misfortunes, and had a pillow fetched to soften the hard garden seat. I must confess the three of us had a gay time of it. A rare motherly soul was Mrs. Fletcher, yet she had a twinkling eye withal.

Then came my friend Ted, and his father, and with them Colonel John Skinner, a courtly and handsome gentleman, though young. Anne and her mother left us in the garden, where Sambo fetched us coffee, and we talked.

Colonel Skinner looked doubtful.

"About an exchange for you, Mr. Trelawny, we can do nothing at the moment. Everything is in confusion," he said. "To be honest, the destruction of Washington has put our people into such a rage that I'd not answer for your safety were you at large."

"I don't blame them, either," I said bitterly. "A shameful thing it was." "Our own people started it by burning the Navy Yard," said Ted Fletcher. "However, what's done is done. Trelawny stays here as long as desired."

"Aye," said his father, nodding to me. "Welcome, sir, and be at ease."

"There's more to it," broke in Skinner anxiously. "If Sir George Cockburn hangs old Dr. Beanes as he has threatened, all the rules of warfare will be abrogated—"

"He'll not, sir," I broke in. "I know the Admiral well. He's impetuous and choleric, says rash things, does brave and gallant and ignoble ones, as we all do; but he's not the man to hang prisoners."

"Let time tell," said Skinner uneasily. "The British fleet's down the

bay and may well attack Baltimore before they're done. Everything is at sixes and sevens; I expect to receive orders regarding the case of Dr. Beanes before long; then we'll see."

He fell into talk with Dr. Fletcher, as the father was known, not for medical knowledge but because of a philosophic degree he had, although a merchant. They were speaking of the internal troubles of the States, which I gathered were in a welter of political feuds, although engaged in a bitter war abroad; also, an intense selfishness among laboring men and farmers seemed to be evident.

"I've never forgotten the words of General Washington to my father," said Colonel Skinner. "Although uttered twenty years ago, they're as much to the point this very day."

"What were they?" Dr. Fletcher demanded. "I've heard your father speak of them, but he never repeated them in my presence."

"I had him write them down from memory," Skinner rejoined; and he produced a paper. "Here we are; I'll read it, gentlemen, if Mr. Trelawny will excuse us."

now, to me they seem fraught with a deep but passionate heart-wisdom. Let me quote them here from my copy:

There is a spirit abroad of most inauspicious moment, one of evil augury, one of less than Christian faith, of the most unbridled and rampant selfishness. In doing as so many do—that is, in giving for the hope of getting, and in denying all we fought for, that by such denial might be gained a little pelf, we see not the danger to any person or standard of ideals, but the peril of a nation. There was at one time a great hope that our land might banish forever the evil of politicians and the moral obloquy of self-seeking men. It has failed. To you, sir, and to my fellow-Americans, I would utter one thought:

Think, and give as you think, not for yourselves but for those who died at the beginning. Think firmly and live firmly, and bravely stand on the argument that eternal is an ideal if it be backed by strength of mind and spirit. Use not what we left in trust



Some fool fired a musket under my horse's nose, and off he went, taking me with him.

"Mr. Trelawny is extremely interested," I said, laughing. "Good God, gentlemen, you should not regard an Englishman as your enemy—or at least as a disinterested party! After all, General Washington was ours before he was yours—"

I broke off in some confusion, as they smiled. Skinner then read what the great man had said, speaking about troubles then prevalent in the new confederation of states. Afterward, I begged a copy of the words. Why? They are not wonderful—they are mere words; and yet, then and



Ted Fletcher fell to laughing. He said: "Give me your parole and I'll save my powder."

as a thing for ambition's goal! Veritably I say that if this trust be denied or betrayed by unworthy souls, the blame for what must then happen is theirs—and a most heavy blame it shall be! Troubles impend with a sardonic and evil-hearted race of workers. So to petty men and small souls who would risk all for vanity and shadows of power, I say: Damned be that scoundrel who sees in the greatness of a nation only his contemptible little self!

Of American affairs I know little, but those words to me seem true of our affairs in England; and in whatever country you choose, how well they depict vile rascals in office! Here in America where I write, I think there must ever be need of that noble admonition: "Use not what we left in trust as a thing for ambition's goal!" So speak our forefathers, ever.

FROM these words, I can mark the beginning of the change in me; they first showed me the meaning of this new country and what it was.

And at the risk of selfish-seeming, the days that followed revealed what such a country might mean to me personally. Do not think me so ignoble as to cast off traditions and training and heritage because of a momentary whim or a pretty face. I think that something in me must have been preparing for this day, and this destiny. And I would point you to Lord Fairfax and to others, who deliberately chose this country for their own, whether in war or peace.

In this home I had fallen among honest, kindly, sincere friends; it was like Paradise to a homing soul, rather than captivity on parole. No attempt was made to pry information from me. Such men as Skinner and the others I met were of an honor equal to my own. How far my relations with Mistress Anne were responsible, must be left to your perception. She and I seemed to have come together from afar, upon a swift and instinctive footing; though it were one of gay laughter at the beginning, it soon became serious enough.

So we ran into September, and now the affair of Dr. Beanes came to a head.

The city was in a continual uproar of preparation against attack. The harbor was commanded by Fort McHenry, a small place on a little height, and batteries were being emplaced in other positions, to command its rear; my friend Ted Fletcher was at work from dawn until dark on this business. Then one evening Colonel Skinner came to the house to confer with me, and with him brought a friend, a Mr. Francis Scott Key of Georgetown, who was associated with

him in the matter of the Upper Middleboro medico, Dr. Beanes.

"Mr. Key," said Skinner to me, "has met Sir George Cockburn in the past, and therefore has offered to associate himself with me in the enterprise. Frankly, it's a risky business. We must go down the bay and go aboard the flagship, and who knows what we'll meet?"

Key, who was a smallish man, had a singularly frank and open manner. He was one of those rare persons to whom one takes an instant liking.

"I don't think you need worry, gentlemen," I said. "Go under a flag of truce, and you're safe enough."

"With a violent enemy who has burned our capitol and violates all rules of war?"

"Nonsense! Mistakes are made, but Sir George is no scoundrel," I insisted. "Why not take me along and exchange me for Beanes?"

"I'll not permit any exchange," snapped Skinner, "—though I thank you for the offer. Dr. Beanes was taken forcibly, and must be restored freely to liberty."

"Aye, that's our right, and we'll stand or fall on it," said Key, then smiled at me. "But, Mr. Trelawny, if you'll give your parole to return with us, your presence might indeed be a reassurance."

"Gladly! Say the word, and I'm with you!" I assented.

We shook hands on it, and decided to leave in the morning. I was amused that British officers should be regarded as ogres and monsters capable of any infamy; it arose from a natural fear of the invader, and from inexperience. Both those men were a bit nervous, and were doing what was actually a very courageous thing.

WE set off after sunrise in a boat with half a dozen rowers and Ted Fletcher at the tiller, with a conspicuous white flag. It was September 6th. I was again wearing my uniform, or what was left of it; little did I then dream that it was for the last time.

The fleet lay in the lower bay—frigates and towering ships of the line, sloops and corvettes and bomb-vessels. A good deal of activity was evident, and I wondered what was up. Cockburn's flag as Admiral flew from the *Neptune*, 74. I pointed her out and we headed for her, but a barge was already coming to meet us. In her stern was Captain Huntley, the flagship's captain and fleet commodore—an overbearing, bitter man whom I much disliked.

The barge laid aboard us and demanded our business, which Colonel Skinner stated.

"Mr. Trelawny, what are you doing aboard there?" sang out the Commodore.

"As your Admiral has been informed," said Skinner, "he's a prisoner on parole."

Huntley ignored him and ordered me aboard the barge.

"Sorry, sir. My parole renders me subject only to Colonel Skinner," I said. Huntley flew into a passion and ordered us all aboard if we wanted to see the Admiral. Fletcher was bade wait here or return to town, under penalty of being fired upon, as maneuvers were under way and no craft from shore were permitted closer to the fleet.

It had to be done, so it was done. Huntley, giving me black looks, took us along to the flagship.

COCKBURN and a group of officers received us on the quarterdeck. Sir George, a splendid handsome figure of a man, was affability itself; he even tipped me a wink while Skinner was stating his business, then invited us all down to the main cabin.

There, with tobacco and wine set forth, he bade Skinner speak freely. He made no comment until the commissioner had finished, then broke into a smile.

"Well, gentlemen, far from hanging your Dr. Beanes—a word spoken in passion—I've already learned that he was brought aboard under a misconception. He's at present a guest on one of the other ships, and shall be brought here at once and placed at liberty," he said. "I presume you intended to exchange Lieutenant Trelawny for him?"

"We did not," said Skinner stiffly. "He is on parole, and came as an assurance for our safety. There is no question of exchange for Dr. Beanes, who is a civilian and was brutally taken from his home by your orders."

"Right," said Sir George. "Egad, you're in the right! A health with you, gentlemen."

We drank the toast. Sir George wanted me back and said so. Since he had no prisoners of like rank to offer in exchange, Skinner refused.

"Well, there's no haste," said the Admiral. "I'm keeping you gentlemen as my guests for a few days. You'll not suffer in the least, upon my word. Unfortunately we're beginning certain operations of the greatest secrecy, and I dare take no chances of letting you go ashore."

This was a facer, and the dismayed Skinner argued to no purpose. Huntley asked if he might speak privately with me. Colonel Skinner of course assented, and I went into one of the other cabins with the Commodore, who at once asked me about dispositions ashore of the rebel forces, as he termed them.

"The enemy have asked me nothing," I said. "While on parole, the

most elementary honor requires that I do not serve as spy. Therefore, sir—"

"Why, you impudent rascal! I'll have you broke for this!" cried Huntley.

"Try and be damned to you," I told him flatly. "There may be blackguards in the Royal Navy, but any Admiralty court consists of gentlemen."

He had the misfortune to slap my face, whereat I knocked him down. Just then in came the Admiral, and slammed the door hurriedly.

"Good God, gentlemen! What does this mean?" he demanded. Huntley swore that it meant a duel; satisfaction he must and would have. He told what had happened, and Sir George flew into a fury.

"You damned incompetent rattle-trap!" he fumed. "You're a disgrace to the service! Satisfaction? You've had all you'll get. Trelawny is absolutely right. If this goes any farther, I'll prefer charges against you. Leave us, sir!"

He departed. Sir George turned to me.

"Too bad; we've a few like him, as you know. Trelawny, these Americans are amazingly fine fellows; gentlemen, both of them. But Skinner insists I should return you to the city to bear word of their safety—and damme, he's right."

I smiled. "You're not afraid I'll give away any information?"

"Of course not. The fact is, we're about to assault and take the city—not a raid as with Washington, but the opening of a land offensive. Conquest, my lad, conquest! We'll have you out of their hands immediately it's over. You can take back whatever message these gentlemen wish to send. Amusing, that they should bring you to assure their safety!"

He began to laugh, then stopped. "Well?" he barked. "You don't find it amusing?"

"After all, sir, you vowed to hang this Dr. Beanes. And Washington was burned."

He turned brick red for an instant, and his eyes flashed.

"True. I'll never hear the last of it," he said. "And I remember now—you were said to have indulged in hot protests at the time of the burning. I daresay you presume to have opinions about it?"

"I think it a lasting disgrace, sir, to our cause and to the service."

NOW he went very white, and looked at me steadily for a long moment, keeping his temper with deliberation. Then his voice grated like iron on iron.

"No junior officer of His Majesty's Navy has a right to utter such an



opinion—whether it be true or false,” he said slowly. “You hot-headed Cornishman! Would you provoke me to anger? What would your uncle, Lord James, say to this?”

“Precisely what I say, sir,” I told him. “And when you’ve taken the city, I shall quit the service.”

He started. “Charles, are you mad? In time of war—oh, absurd! You can’t do it.”

“I’ve made my decision, sir,” I said. “When the campaign is over, I shall do it.”

His proud head fell slightly. “That’s what Lord James Trelawny

would do,” he murmured in a low voice. “Egad, it’s what I—no, by the Lord Harry! A man faces his mistakes and sees them through to the end! I’ll face mine. But I can see your mind. I respect it.” His hand came out to my shoulder. “Perhaps it’s a harder thing to stick and see it through. . . . Stuff and nonsense! Devil take the whole thing! Get out of here, and I’ll send you ashore with your messages, and be damned to you!”

That ended it; but I had seen into him for a minute, and I knew he

would never escape from the shame of those doings ashore at Washington, not even if he were heaped with titles and honors.

Ted Fletcher's boat had been recalled, and was waiting a few miles up the bay. The Commodore's barge, but not the Commodore, took me back to the boat, and we were free to go. I had a hasty note from Skinner to his father, and promised Key that I would write his wife at Georgetown with reassurances. Fletcher, hearing why they were detained, grinned at me.

"That means an attack coming, and you'll say nothing. Y'know, Trelawny, I never had much use for Britishers until I met you sitting in that ditch."

"I could say the same of Americans," said I, and we laughed together. "Although," I added, "you're far from being at your father's level; what a grand man he is! Not to mention your lady mother."

"Oh, she's an angel," he said, and nodded his head. "I know Father's a few steps ahead of anything I'll ever be. What's that bundle you fetched aboard?"

"My razors and some of my personal effects from aboard ship," I replied. "Why didn't you get a fresh uniform?"

"I'm done with it, once ashore," I said, "for I've money here and can buy some clothes."

He gave me a queer look but asked no questions, which was just as well.

To be honest, I was not yet quite settled in my mind.

Our news made a fine commotion in the city. Fletcher went back to his post at the forts. I went to the house in Albemarle Street. A lady from farther up the street, a Mistress Pickersgill, was there with her two nieces, showing Mistress Fletcher a flag she had just finished making for Fort McHenry. 'Twas a monstrous affair, nearly thirty-three feet long by over twenty-seven wide, with fifteen stars and as many stripes.

"Make it big," Major Armistead says," quoted the good lady, "so the British can see it from down the bay! And so it is."

She was extremely proud of it, and with reason, as events proved. . . .

I would have withdrawn from the Fletcher residence, but my hosts would have none of it; and to tell the truth, my offers were only perfunctory. I liked it there as nowhere else in life I had ever found—even Trelawny Hall. Somehow, it seemed, I just fitted there; nor do I refer to Mistress Anne alone. Even Sambo, I recall, paid me the definite honor of



Key lifted his voice into the refrain, then others chimed in. They sang it over and over.

saying that it seemed like he had been tending on Master Charles all his life. Although a slave, Sambo was a truly remarkable man; one of God's gentlemen, Dr. Fletcher called him.

Nearly a week passed. The fleet had landed a good many troops and marines, but these remained inactive; nothing apparently was under way. I could guess that a surprise attack was intended, of course. Baltimore was jammed with militia from the district roundabout.

Sir George, however, was too cocksure. Late on the night of the 12th the whole city came awake to word that the fleet was coming up the bay; and so it was. With daylight the first guns were heard; five bomb-vessels had come up off Fort McHenry and were bombarding it.

TO my surprise there was no panic to speak of in the city. I urged Dr. Fletcher to evacuate his family; he refused point blank, and instead brought up a light wagon and a team of horses and took us to a bit of rolling ground behind the city, whence we could get a view of Fort McHenry and the wide estuary of the Patapsco River. Fletcher and I and the two ladies made ourselves comfortable, and the operations began to unfold themselves.

Off the fort lay sixteen sail, all vessels of light draft; the water was too shoal for the big ships to come up.

All day long the bombs flew, and Congreve rockets, those devilish inventions which had scattered the Yankee forces in the advance on Washington, poured in upon the fort; and as the rockets had a two-mile range, the guns of the fort could not make great response. We could see the great flag waving above the round parapet on high.

"Wait till night," I told the Fletchers. "If troops have indeed landed to assault, they must silence the fort first of all. If the fort holds, the city holds."

Gunfire reached us in the afternoon, and news in plenty, with rumors to boot, for throngs of people were by this time collected about our post of vantage. A British army was ashore at North Point, a dozen miles south of Baltimore, and advancing. Skirmishing was going on; the militia was facing them like men. . . .

Food was eaten by snatches, drink gulped at random. When night drew down, we could appreciate the majesty and awe of this spectacle. Bombs were curving high from the lighter vessels before the fort, now closing in more nearly. Rockets were streaming upon the devoted target in lines of flame across the darkness. The bursts lit shore and sky and foaming smoke-cloud with infernal glare. And the



fort made steady, furious response, hour after hour.

Once, indeed, something else took place. New gunnery opened, volleys of musketry rang out in precision—a landing had been made close to the fort. I could most fully appreciate what happened next; they were my old comrades and friends who were dying there. For suddenly the fortress and her batteries to the rear burst into a blasting tornado of fire which actually was prolonged upon the landing party. They were firing red-hot shot. Presently the activity ceased.

"That's the end," I told the Fletchers, and none too happily either. "The landing party has been smashed, and unless our army—I mean the British—have cleaned out the militia and can take the fort by assault, the battle's over."

There was no sign of that. Instead, news came that the troops were withdrawing, although the shower of bomb and rockets still continued upon the fort, and went on all through the night. We drove back into the city, but there was no bed for any soul that night, until the day brought definite news that the fleet were dropping back down the bay and the troops had retired from the hastily thrown-up entrenchments so gallantly manned by the militia.

It was a repulse, a repulse so absolute and bloody that I knew well it would not be tried again.

As morning grew, the whole city became a madhouse of wild and joyous celebration that went to insane lengths. Bells were ringing, guns were banging, everyone was in the streets. The McHenry garrison was being paraded about and carried on shoulders; bonfires were going on all sides; speeches were being made at every street-corner; fifes and drums

were squealing and clattering, and firewater was free for the quaffing. But the Fletcher house was closed and dark and silent as the dead that lay in it; for my friend, grinning, light-hearted Ted Fletcher, had been killed in those night trenches.

It is easy for those who have not heard the feet of the dead passing forever from their lives, to prate of glorious death garlanded by victory; God help us in the dread moment that must forever come to each heart on earth! It is a bitter thing, and it comes to every man alive, and nothing so draws together stranger hearts as the touch of this unknown and invisible hand. I grieved with my friends and as one of them.

As the day drew on into afternoon, the celebration continued as furiously as ever; the militia and countryfolk crowding into Baltimore were keeping up full force. In midafternoon a Negro asked for me and was brought to where I sat with Dr. Fletcher in the garden.

He delivered his message. Mr. Key and Colonel John Skinner were at the Fountain Inn, in Market Street, and were dining at once; they begged me and the Fletchers to join them. I questioned the black. They had just come ashore, and evidently knew nothing of the tragedy.

"Go back," said Dr. Fletcher, "and tell them we'll be along at once, boy. Here's a shilling for your pains."

He turned and faced me, at my surprised exclamation.

"Of course I'll go; so you shall, also, and say nothing of our personal loss. This is a day of national joy. Leave our sorrow shut up here at home where it belongs, for the moment. . . . Come!"

WELL, we made our way through the crowded, hysterical throngs and came at last to the tavern. It was a bedlam, like every other public place in town, but dinner had been laid in the big room for Key, Skinner and their friends. They had been sent safely ashore, with Dr. Beanes, who had posted off home. It was a crowded place and everyone was too excited to care whether the food were good or bad.

I found a chair; Fletcher got another, and a swig of grog did me good. Then, to my surprise, Colonel Skinner got to his feet, shouted for silence, and obtained it.

"Gentlemen!" cried out the Government agent. "While we stood on a British deck and watched the assault on the fort, we did not know whether or not McHenry could hold out. We could only tell by the flag waving above her—"

"Mrs. Pickersgill's flag!" shouted someone.

"Right," said Skinner. He had full attention now. "Not until dawn revealed it still flying did we know that it flew for victory! But during the night my old friend Mr. Key had been composing a song—and damme, a rattling good song it is! He wrote it down in the boat that fetched us ashore—"

"And all but lost it," Kev broke in, laughing. "The wind blew the paper out of my hand, but a sailor caught it and passed it back to me. 'Twould have been no great loss, I must say. A British officer suggested preserving the scene in song, so I did."

"Well, read it aloud!" exclaimed Skinner. "Let the company be judge of its merits!"

"Aye, read it, read it!" swelled up a chorus of voices. "Hear, hear! Up, Key, up!"

KEY stood up, flushed and smiling, K smoothing out an old letter on the back of which he had set down his song.

"You embarrass me, 'pon my word!" he said. "I attach no importance whatever to the thing, but if you want it you shall have it. The words fit the old air of the Revolution that everybody knows—'Adams and Liberty.' So, while I'll not make bold to sing the words, let everyone join in the refrain!"

Skinner prodded him into a chair; standing on it, the better to elevate his short stature above the crowd, Key lifted his voice and began to read:

*Oh, say, can you see by the dawn's
early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the
twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars,
thro' the perilous fight
O'er the ramparts we watched were
so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs
bursting in air,
Gave proof thro' the night that our
flag was still there!
Oh, say, does that star-spangled
banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the
home of the brave?*

A voice swung into the refrain; then others chimed in. They sang it over and over, with so obvious and eager a relish for the sentiment that Key flushed again in surprise and gratification. His hand lifted, obtained silence, and he resumed:

*On the shore dimly seen thro' the
mists of the deep
Where the foe's haughty host in
dread silence reposes—*

He broke off for an instant. "That refers to the British shore force waiting to attack from North Point," he explained, and went on:

*What is that which the breeze o'er
the towering steep
As it fitfully blows, half conceals,
half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the
morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected, now shines in
the stream!
'Tis the star-spangled banner! Oh,
long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the
home of the brave!*

The refrain mounted upon a surge of excited voices. A man had run outside and came back into the room with a fife and drummer from the courtyard. The rafters quivered to the shouted roar of the final line.

I was, I confess, deeply moved. I looked at Dr. Fletcher, and saw him sitting with his eyes closed; tears were sliding down his cheeks. Then Key's voice lifted upon the silence anew:

*And where is that band who so
vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the
battle's confusion
A home and a country should leave
us no more?
Their blood has washed out their
foul footsteps' pollution!
No refuge could save the hireling
and slave
From the terror of light or the gloom
of the grave!
And the star-spangled banner in
triumph doth wave—*

"WE have begun to realize," writes Walter Lippmann in "The Living Past," in the New York Herald-Tribune, "in these days how close we have come to separating the coming generation from its heritage in the American past: we are shocked and dismayed to discover how unreal the great Americans have become to them, how the events which have formed the nation are dim, how dangerously close we have come to being a people who inhabit the land with their bodies without possessing it in their souls."

"But we must know also that there is no short way to make the past live again in men's minds: it cannot be done by passing a law, or by appropriating money, or by a witch hunt among the professors. The American past can be brought to life again only by men who tell the majestic story once more, aware that they are making history and not merely writing it. When we read the writings of the early Americans we find that, unlike our own generation, the past was continually present in their minds as part of their own experience. They were making a new government, and for their own guidance, for knowledge of what to do, they drew not upon surveys of contemporary opinion and questionnaires but upon precedent and experience."

Key's voice was lost as the fife skirled, and a storm of wild voices caught up the final line, until the room was actually rocking again as the refrain peeled out in its full triumphant force.

The handsome features of the Georgetown man were shaken by emotion, and no wonder. Swung up in the grip of mass-excitement let loose, more than one of those men roaring out the song had tears streaming down his cheeks. Some of these men and most of their fathers had sweated and starved and fought in the Revolution. Many of them had been in Fort McHenry or in the trenches during that assault. The "Land of the Free" was no empty phrase; it meant everything to them—and, by heaven, I first began to comprehend the meaning of those words myself, in this moment! But I saw Dr. Fletcher sitting unmoved, except for the tears that came and fell and came again on his cheeks.

Mugs and forks hammered the tables in time to the words as the drum rolled and the fife squealed; and then came silence.

"One more stanza," said Key, a trifle unsteadily; but he was not drunk with liquor. "I haven't the words writ down yet but I have them in mind. I'll try to sing them—"

A BURST of applause and encouragement brought the flashing smile once more to his lips. The fife struck up the tune—an old Revolutionary air borrowed from a still older drinking-song—and he began to sing. He sang, as he doubtless never had before or would again, for the very atmosphere here was surcharged, was tense with the electric excitement of those who listened, and this quality crept into his voice:

*Oh, thus be it ever when free men
shall stand
Between their loved homes and the
war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may
the Heav'n-rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made
and preserved us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our
cause it is just,
And this be our motto: 'In God is
our trust!'
And the star-spangled banner in
in triumph doth wave—*

The whole company was off once more, while mugs beat time and the drummer whanged away like a madman to the rocking uplift of voices. Key sank back into his chair, looking white and shaken, while applause showered upon him and everyone demanded a copy of the song.

Skinner, catching my eye, crowded close and shouted at my ear:

"Come along—room at the head of the stairs—must settle your status."

I nodded, and he bustled off, getting Key out of the place. With some difficulty I followed, and Dr. Fletcher with me, the song still roaring up around us.

We reached the room indicated. Dr. Fletcher went up to Mr. Key and took his hand.

"That song, Francis—how can I express it?" he exclaimed. "It showed me something. I fear my heart's been bitter this day against God and man. Well, that has passed! Yes, you showed me, made me realize it; now, for the first time, I can see why Theodore had to leave us—how we should be proud and happy in our thoughts of him! It's a hard viewpoint to attain, God knows, but perhaps in the years to come your song will help many another person to reach it—"

The others were slow to comprehend his emotion, until I told them of Ted Fletcher's death. Skinner, who had known the boy all his life, was deeply moved. He said what he could to Dr. Fletcher, then turned to me.

"I think we may place you at liberty, Mr. Trelawny, at once," he said. "I am not minded to hold you as a technical prisoner. The fleet is withdrawing. Sir George tells me that as quickly as the troops and wounded are embarked, he'll depart. Therefore, go if you like, when you like."

"Thank you," I said. "It is true. I must go aboard the flagship for a personal interview with Sir George; but I've no intention of departing."

"Eh? Why, that's good news, good news!" said Dr. Fletcher heartily. "Stay as long as ye will, and welcome! Must go aboard the flagship, say you?"

"Aye, to resign from the service, as I can do now the campaign's ended," I said. "If you'll have me, I'd like to remain here—to make up a little, if I can, for your loss. I can't take Ted's place in your heart, sir; but if you and Mrs. Fletcher will permit me to say so, your friendship has awakened a very sincere affection in me—"

I blundered on in awkward confusion, but Fletcher interrupted:

"Permit! Don't use the word, lad; I think we're all in harmony. This will make Mother very happy. I'll get home, and leave you to follow at leisure. Gentlemen, your servant."

No sooner did the door shut on him, than Skinner turned on me.

"Trelawny! Did I hear you aright? Remain here, you say, leave the service—"

"And become, like many another Englishman, an American," I said, smiling.

"But man! Your family! They tell me you have a great one, and estates—"

"So I have, so I have, but here in Baltimore," I said. "At least, from something Mistress Anne Fletcher said to me yesterday, while we watched the bombardment, I have every reason to suppose that the greatest good fortune in the world in shape of family and friends and future, all comprised in one sweet person, may smile upon my intentions—"

"A health, a health!" cried Mr. Key. "Gentlemen, we must drink a health to this! Give me your hand, Trelawny, and God bless you!"

THE pages dropped upon the lap of the old man who sat before the sputtering fire. For a little while he stared into the blaze, his imperious features oddly softened, his bitter eyes now thoughtful, now widening again, as though amid those ruddy flames he perceived something glorious and tender and inspiring.

A sigh escaped him. "Aye, God bless you, Charles!" he said, and reaching out to his wine-glass, he sipped the ruby port. "I'll join in the toast—"

His words died. Again he sat motionless for a space, then lifted his glass solemnly. His voice rang out with sudden firm strength.

"To you, sir!" he said, as though he saw some actual person there before him. "I never thought to give my respects to a rebel; I pay them to a great man. My compliments, sir! 'Bravely stand on the argument that an ideal is eternal if it be backed by strength of mind and spirit! Use not what we left in trust as a thing for ambition's goal! Those are great words, Mr. Washington, noble words, aptly fitting to all times and all generations. Sir, I salute you!'"

He emptied the wineglass and sent it crashing against the fireplace bricks, for it would never have a nobler toast drunk from its brim

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Always spoken of by Skinner & Key as the "song," I doubt if Mr. Key would appreciate having it changed to read "poem." He did not think highly of it until its surprising popularity showed that it had something.

The version here used is the final one. The original actually read at the inn was slightly different. Key fitted it more properly to the music a few days later, as we have it now.

Oddly, no two versions of this battle agree in detail or description. Even Scribner's "Popular History" has the British Admiral named Cochrane. He was not.

Key wrote "when" and not "for our cause it is just."

Another story of "The Flags of Our Fathers" will appear in our forthcoming August issue.

A brief story with lots in it,

by WILLIAM BRANDON

UNCLE EMANUEL squinted at the ring through his eyepiece and said sorrowfully: "It is a nice stone." He burnished the solitaire with his thumb, and sighed, and looked up at Jake. "Well, you know how it is. I can give you fifty dollars."

"I paid a hundred, Manny."

"Ya. You were crazy." He looked significantly at the single chevron on Jake's uniform sleeve, which indicated he was a first-class private, at an income of thirty-six dollars a month. He clicked his tongue and shrugged. When Jake had been drawing ninety a week from the *Dispatch* he was a steady customer in scholarly old Uncle Emanuel's hock-shop; if he hadn't been able to learn the value of money on those wages, he couldn't be expected to do any better now. Not like Jake's friend Britten; young Britten knew how to make money, not spend it. Young Britten had never been in Manny's shop except to buy; he knew a hock-shop was the place for bargains, if you were sharp.

Young Britten had worked from the financial desk of the *Dispatch*, and he used his Wall Street pipe-lines to turn up profitable tips for himself. Young Britten was not now a private first class and a company clerk; he had a lieutenant's commission, more money, and a tailored uniform. Young Britten was not trying to hock an engagement ring so he could go on a drunk and forget that his girl had turned him down. She hadn't turned young Britten down. Young Britten, hard and polished and clever; Jake, red-headed and clumsy, easy-going. A happy guy, not tough enough. You had to be tough and smart to get the things out of life young Britten intended to get.

Uncle Emanuel turned the ring to let the gem catch the light and said: "A hundred dollars yet."

"I wanted her to have the best," Jake said bitterly. "I'll take the fifty."

"Sentiment," Uncle Emanuel said with distaste, rubbing his beard. Young Britten would never go broke on sentiment. "And now all you want is money to go on a bat. . . . All right, all right. Don't get excited, boy. I got to make out a ticket, ain't I?"

"No," Jake said. "No ticket, no sermon, no nothing. I don't want to hock it—I want to sell it. Why should I hock it? I won't be wanting it again."

Uncle Emanuel turned away and fumbled among his shelves and re-

The Magic Mirror

turned with a hand mirror. He polished it on his sleeve and held it up, smiling craftily. "Look, Jake. Look! Wrought silver. Here. See the workmanship."

Jake turned the mirror in his hands. "Just the dough, Manny. No trades. What would I want with a mirror?"

"Listen!" Uncle Emanuel handed Jake a cigar and lit one himself. "Maybe sometime you've read the poems by Chaucer—where there's a magic mirror." The old man closed his eyes and quoted: "*That men may in it see who is your freend or foe; if any lady bright hath set her heart on any manner wight, if he be false she shall his treason see.*" He waved his cigar. "Virgil's mirror. it's called. Famous from old times."

Jake grinned grudgingly. "Are you saying this is a magic mirror?"

"Jake, I would cut my throat before I would lie about my merchandise."

"Why, I wouldn't doubt your word, Manny." Jake held up the mirror and looked at it. "Wonderful."

"You got to draw a circle in it," Uncle Emanuel said, matter-of-factly.

"I believe, brother," Jake said, "I believe. Very interesting. I'm still waiting for my fifty bucks."

"Okay, boy. Only, don't be too sure you know it all. Maybe there's things in this world you don't know. You're smarter yet than Alhazen the astronomer, and Vitello the mathematician, and Aristotle? All right. But don't put that mirror down. Keep it! I tell you—you take that mirror. Free—no charge! If it turns out phony, it's yours for nothing. Beautiful wrought silver. All for nothing. If it works—well, come back then, and we talk business. . . . Now wait." Uncle Emanuel held up a hand. "Let me finish, will you? I am only a business man, talking business. Aint it the lady's birthday? Because she don't want a ring, you won't give her nothing? Take her the mirror. A farewell gift. I tell you, it is free. For nothing, not a penny. You won't even give her a present costs you nothing? Take it, boy. I tell you, in this case only I would make the offer. See if it is magic."

"The lady doesn't want any presents from me," Jake said. "I'll settle for fifty bucks."

"All right." Uncle Emanuel lifted his hands and turned away. He came back with the money and counted it out. "Fifty-five dollars," he said irritably. "For an outright sale it is more. All right. You know. You're

smart." The old man hesitated, and again offered the mirror to Jake. "Only look. Still I let you take the mirror. Maybe you'll get to thinking there was people in the old times as smart as you. Take it. Go ahead, put it in your pocket. Only, remember the rules: whoever wants to see the truth in it has got to draw in it a circle. That's all, just a circle in the glass. I tell you again, if it don't work, keep it for nothing. If it does work—well, come again, and we talk business. . . . All right, laugh! You ever catch me crazy before, did you? This is a business deal."

Jake pocketed the mirror, grinning, believing this was Manny's way of giving him a present commemorating their long business association. The overcrowded little shop, festooned with hanging mandolins and cameras, did not lend credent background to talk of magic mirrors. Jake said: "You'll wait a long time before you see a profit on this one, Manny. I'll hang it over my bunk and think of you when I shave."

Uncle Emanuel nodded his head. "All right, boy. I wait and see."

THERE was a bell beside Uncle Emanuel's door which could be rung at night, after business hours, to summon him from his apartment upstairs. Manny had installed the bell long before, for the convenience of employees in the *Dispatch* building around the corner, who were apt to need money at odd times. Sometime after three in the morning Jake re-

turned and leaned on the bell for ten minutes or so, until a light showed inside the shop, and Uncle Emanuel came to open the door.

"Well," the old man said, "you have woke up my whole family!"

Jake took a deep breath, as it to clear his head. He came into the shop, and Uncle Emanuel saw a dazed look on his face, and smelled whisky on his breath. His red hair was sticking out from under his cap, which was turned sideways on his head, and his left hand was cut and swollen.

"I've got it," Jake said, "here, some place." He fumbled for the mirror. "I happened to see her in a place, Manny. She was with Britten. You know, the Lieutenant. Well, I thought, I'll give her Manny's present, Manny's good old magic mirror." He breathed deeply again, and came up with the mirror. "She said it was nice, Manny. She thanked me for it. She wanted to see if it would work, so she drew a circle in it with the Lieutenant's ring. The Lieutenant gave her a wonderful engagement ring, Manny. It belonged to his great-grandmother. Only—it wouldn't draw a circle in your magic mirror, Manny. It wouldn't make a mark. You wouldn't think the Lieutenant's great-grandmother would hand down a paste diamond, would you, Manny?" He leaned busily against the counter, and straightened his cap so that the peak pointed to the rear. "When I said I thought I knew where the ring came from, the Lieutenant got sore." Jake blew on his puffy hand.

Uncle Emanuel took the mirror and padded around behind his counter, holding an overcoat around his shoulders, the tails of his nightshirt flapping below it. "Still you got to be a rundum," he said. "Boozed up and fighting, as if magic aint enough. So now, we talk business. You want the mirror, Jake?"

"I want my ring back," Jake said.

"Oh. You want your ring back."

"I think I can use it," Jake said.

"Well, that's good."

Uncle Emanuel brought out the ring and polished the setting with his thumb. "Clear," he said placidly. "A small little stone, but clear. I can make you a nice price. Say sixty-five dollars."

"Sixty-five?" Jake said, bringing money out of his pocket. "You gave me fifty-five."

Uncle Emanuel looked surprised. "Didn't I say it was a business deal? Maybe I should make magic for nothing."



*Illustrated by
Charles Chickering*



The Story of **POOCH**

And Sundry other People, by John T. McIntyre

THE dog-shop was on Main Street; it was a bright, clean-looking place with a gayly striped awning in front, and a large show window. The kennels and cages were at the back; and the home of Mr. Filbert, the proprietor, was at one side.

When the sun struck the brightly colored awning, it brightened the shop up wonderfully. Mr. Filbert saw to it that there was a new show in the window twice a week. There might be a half-dozen setter pups; there might be a brace of two-months-old beagles, or a beautiful spaniel mother, with her

family, lively, shining and full of fun, playing around her.

Sometimes there'd be a trio of brisk-looking young terriers; and now and then some spotted coach-dogs. Or maybe the big window would be full of cages of mockingbirds, finches or larks, for Mr. Filbert had all sorts of singing birds. They'd preen their bright feathers; they'd flutter joyously in the sun; the whole shop would be filled with their music.

Mr. Filbert didn't call his place a pet-shop. He didn't like that name.

"What I always think," he'd tell people when they asked, "is that birds

and animals around a place are more than pets. They are friendly creatures, and are helpful and restful to everyone who cares for them. Take the end of a hard day: you get home worn and tired. But look: you whistle to the bird hanging in his cage at the window; he ruffles up his feathers and hops around on his perch, glad to see you. The dog comes bouncing in, having just found out you'd got home; or the cat jumps up on the arm of your chair. Right away you're relaxed and rested. Here are your good friends, ones who have confidence in you and trust you."

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*"He's nice," said Eileen. "But
he's so fastened together with
tape and bandages!"*



And the shop had other things besides dogs and birds: There was quite a number of cats—Siamese, Manx, tortoiseshells, Angoras, all very quiet and well-mannered as they sat in their clean cages. There were some agile sharp-eyed monkeys, also a great lot of bright fish in the stone pools. However, though he kept all these creatures, Mr. Filbert called the place a dog-shop, for he liked dogs best.

Mr. Filbert was small and round-faced; he was very earnest and very honest. He'd kept the dog-shop for years, and his animals all were fond of him; they'd crowd to the bars of their cages when he was near. The dogs waited for a cheering word from him; the birds liked him to put a finger into their cages; they'd chirp and pick at it gently. Michael said, when the birds did this and whistled to each other, they were saying wasn't Mr. Filbert a nice guy?

MICHAEL was a boy who, when he wasn't going to school, worked at the dog-shop. He'd been with Mr. Filbert since he'd been five years old; and now he was fourteen.

"I saw a good deal in the boy even when he was as little as that," Mr. Filbert had once said to Sim Havey, the barber whose place was on the opposite side of Main Street. "I knew he was intelligent. I'd just bought two pointer pups from Henry Brown, and when I stopped to speak to Michael, I had one under each arm. And the way he smiled at them told me he had the right stuff in him. Give me a boy who likes a dog, every time; I know he'll never go far wrong."

And from that day Michael, having no folks of his own, had lived in Mr. Filbert's house; and Mrs. Filbert had mothered him, and cooked good healthful things for him; and she had washed him and sent him off to school when he was old enough. And now, at fourteen, he was taller than Mr. Filbert; and he was strong, and could whistle better than any other boy in that part of town.

When he'd been eight, he'd mended the broken leg of a finch, to the great admiration of Mr. Filbert.

"I thought it was a hopeless case," Mr. Filbert had told his wife at the time. "I'd seen the little bone was splintered, and I shook my head over it. But Michael liked that finch: it's a good musician, and I've noticed him often standing beside its cage and practicing whistling with it. He said it was only a year old and was strong. He thought it could be cured, and that he could do it."

Michael had seen dogs with broken legs. A large Chesapeake water-dog

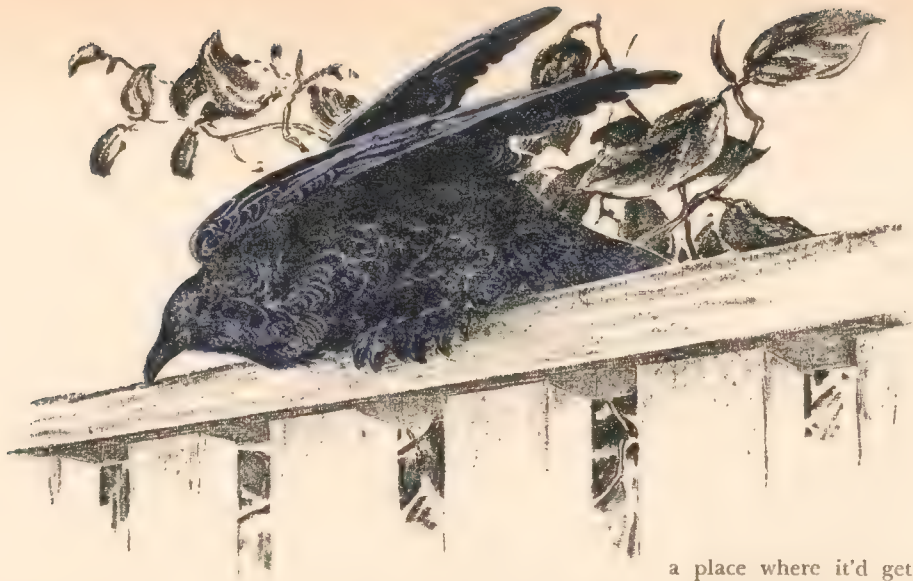
had hurt himself once, and the boy had watched the doctor as he had worked with it. So now he got some adhesive and some strips of gauze; he cut some tiny splints with his pocket-knife and made them very smooth. Then he took the finch from its cage and set to work. With the tips of his fingers he softly went over the injured leg; he found where the break was and pressed the parts carefully together. Julia Havey, the barber's daughter, who was almost ten, held the bird in her hands, hardly daring to breathe, while Michael did this. He fastened the splivers of wood with adhesive cut into small strips, and wrapped the bandages carefully, fastening them so they'd keep in place.

Then the boy arranged the cage so it'd be comfortable, and the small patient was placed in it.

"He'll pick at the things I put on his leg," Michael said, "because he's only a bird and don't understand about them. But I'll watch, and if they get loose, I'll fix them again."



Pooch would look at Chug in a puzzled kind of way, as the crow stepped briskly around the porch rail and shrieked. A bird that talked!



Mrs. Filbert got a complete account of this piece of surgery from Mrs. Havey, Julia's mother.

"Julia says she was scared," said Mrs. Havey. "But Michael wasn't. She says he was just like a doctor; and she says she don't believe he hurt the bird a bit while he was working with it."

At any rate the finch got well; it hopped about on its perches as alertly as ever; and it was Michael's opinion it whistled even better. And another thing:

"Since that time," Mrs. Filbert said, in another conversation with Mrs. Havey, "Mr. Filbert's way with the boy has changed. Of course he's always been kind and nice with him, and very fond of him; but now he speaks to him a good bit like he would to a grown person."

This feeling was unsettled only once afterward. And that was when the boy brought Chug, the crow, into the shop. Michael had been scouting around all of a May afternoon, hunting patches of moss and young shoots for the garden. He was nine years old now, and had a bicycle. With this he could run the roads for quite long distances, and sometimes would venture across the bay by way of the bridge, and along among the dunes, in sight of the sea.

ON this day he hid his bicycle among the bayberry bushes and wandered through the meadows, watching the red-winged blackbirds which had built their nests among the deep green growth. And by and by he came on a tree with a nest of crows. He climbed the tree: there were four of them: black, with small beady eyes, and large wide-open mouths. Because of the pushing and scrambling

in the nest, one of them fell out. Michael slid down the tree and picked it up, meaning to put it back; but while he held it in his hand, he had an impulse to keep it. And so when he went back home, he had the black little imp with him. Mr. Filbert, when he saw it, was for forbidding it the place.

"Crows are nest-robbers," he said. "They kill the young of other birds; they eat their eggs. They are thieving rascals."

"But," said Michael, "this one's not very old. If we keep him, he'll not learn those things. And we'll show him what's best to do. The reason I wanted to keep him was that he looked like a wise little fella, and I thought we might teach him to talk."

Mr. Filbert considered. And while doing so he remembered when, away back in the days when he was nine years old himself, he'd had this same idea. A crow that could talk! He'd thought that would be wonderful.

"And now," he thought, "Michael's about nine and has the very same thing in his mind. More than that: he has the crow—which I never had. So I'll stretch a point and let him keep it."

But he was firm in his refusal not to let it come into the shop. "Besides their thieving, they are full of other kinds of mischief," he told Michael.

So Michael kept the bird in his garret room for a few days until he'd woven a basket cage for it. He'd been taught this kind of work by some gypsies who had camped on the outskirts of the village a few years before. He wove the cage carefully; it was made of twigs and fibrous vines and splints of wood which he soaked in water so they'd bend. Michael hung the cage up in a maple tree, in

a place where it'd get the sun and would also be protected from rain; and he put the young crow inside it.

He fed the bird twice a day with bits of meat or hard-boiled egg; he also gave it corn which he'd broken up, and grains of wheat. It thrived and grew. And there were other birds in the maple tree. There was a pair of thrushes and also of robins who'd made their homes there, and their eggs were in their nests. They knew all crows were their enemies, and they looked at the youngster in the cage with suspicion. They heckled him and bullied him; the male robin more than once tried to break the cage open and drive him away. But it was strong, and it wasn't long before the sly little fellow learned he was safe, and began to answer them when they came hammering at his door and calling him names.

HE imitated them, which made them angry. As the weeks went by, his voice began to get rough and deep; when he scolded, there was a rasp in it. But he could pitch it up when he was in the spirit of mockery; he'd try to make it sound like the liquid notes of the thrush, but it would break into a dismal croak.

But he picked up other sounds, and did very well with them. A small dog belonging to the barber across the way would often sit on the steps of the shop and bark for some one to open the door; the young crow would put his head to one side and listen; and in a little while he'd mastered the bark and did almost as well with it as the dog himself.

There was a knife-grinder who came along Main Street about once each week. His old car would stop in the shade of some trees near Mr. Filbert's shop, and the man would work away on knives and scissors and saws. The



grinding-wheel was turned by a halting old motor: it would go "*chug-chug-chug... Chug-chug-chug!*" The young crow listened to this attentively. He'd hold his head to one side, he'd mutter to himself, and deep down in his throat he'd put the parts of the sound together. By and by people would think they heard the old motor, when it was only the crow in the tree in Filbert's yard.

CHAPTER TWO

BUT now Michael was fourteen; as we've said, he was strong and tall. And he had a freckled face and a very nice smile. When he talked with a person in the shop, they

always felt they were enjoying themselves. For the things Michael talked about were interesting things. About plants, and what to do for them when they seemed backward; about pups or kittens who weren't growing as they should; about the kind of things to feed them, and what was in those things that made them so helpful. And about sunlight: Michael had a belief that sunlight, if you didn't take too much of it, was one of the best and most strengthening things in the world. And also air.

"There are lots of things you hear or read," Michael would say, "that are about the germs that're in the air. Well, maybe they are; but don't forget the good things that're in it—millions and millions of them."

When people came in to ask the price of a dog, a cat or a bird, Michael would tell them. But he was always more interested in the things themselves than in the price Mr. Filbert had put on them. If an old lady came in to ask about a kitten that might grow up to take the place of a favorite cat which had died, Michael would at once be interested. He'd have a picture of a quiet house where everything was in order; the big rooms were airy and cool in summer; there'd be a sitting-room with an open fire in the winter. There'd be a rug before it, and a rocker. And then he'd think of Isobel, and of Madeline, and of Bijou.

A kitten of Isobel's, he knew, would always win a place in a home like that. For Isobel's kittens were quiet and clean and affectionate. They were, also very lady- or gentlemanlike. No cat could sit, or lie, on a rug and look at a fire and give out a greater sense of comfort than one that'd once been an Isobel kitten.

"I'm sorry," was what Michael often said to people who showed an interest in buying a cat, "that Madeline isn't here. She'd please you, and make you look very often at her kit-

tens before you bought any other. Madeline is a tall, proud lady, and with beautiful long black fur. We never had a more stylish cat in the place; and all her families take after her.

"Bijou," he'd say, "isn't like Madeline. She's not as tall, and maybe she's kind of a romp sometimes. But she's got nice eyes, and soft paws. If she wants you to pay attention to something, she gives you a little pat with one of them."

"And Bijou likes to sit on the mantel, especially if it's a mantel that's got ornaments on it. She can hop up on it as easy as anything you ever saw, and step around among the things and never touch them. She sits on Mrs. Filbert's mantel sometimes, and she's so still that if you didn't know her, you'd think she was one of the ornaments."

Yes, Michael was interested in cats; he thought they were wonderful animals: so agile, so swift and supple. So clean! And nothing was so much fun as a pair of kittens when they were about three months old and began to play games together. They were tornadoes of spirit.

But dogs! Michael resembled Mr. Filbert in this. He liked them best. You can think a good bit of a cat; you admire him and feed him and take care of him. And you'd not let anyone hurt him. But a cat's nature is not like a dog's. It's not as warm nor as generous. It's not as loyal. A cat's not for you first, last and forever, the way a dog is. For a friend on a journey through the world, Michael held, give him a dog every time.

AND that brings Pooch directly to our doorstep. He was young; not more than a few months. And he quite likely had strayed away from somewhere. He was thin and bedraggled and hungry; he looked at everyone trustfully—maybe a little hopefully—as he came down Main Street. Young Tom Denny, as he drove along in his car, saw him and laughed, because Pooch was a white dog and had one black eye, just like the dog in the comic picture. And while Tom was laughing, a car came rolling along—much faster than it should have done—and it struck Pooch and threw him yards away, with Pooch crying out in pain and fright. Tom Denny put on his brakes. And he stopped his motor and got out, feeling very angry. For the driver of the car had not stopped; he'd driven swiftly down the street, turned a corner, and was gone.

The young man bent over the injured pup.

"All right, young fellow," he said quietly. "We'll see what we can do. You're frightened, that's what's the matter with you, mostly, I think."

The yelping stopped; the injured dog tried to lick Tom's hand; there was gratitude in his eyes.

Tom picked the little beast up. There were quite a number of people now, who'd gathered around; and as Tom stood there with Pooch in his arms trying to think of where he could take him, someone said:

"Maybe Mr. Filbert could do something for him."

To be sure! The very thing! The dog-shop was right at hand, and the young man carried the pup inside. But as it happened, Mr. Filbert was not there. However, Michael was.

"I saw it," said Michael. "The man saw the pup when he struck it. But he didn't want to be bothered."

HE took the little animal from Tom Denny and put it upon a table.

"Ho-ho!" cried a hoarse voice. "Look at the dog!" It was Chug, the crowd, who sat on the top of an open door at the back of the shop, his shoe-button eyes full of interest. "What's the matter?" demanded Chug loudly. "What's the matter?"

"Whose dog is he?" asked Tom Denny as they bent over the table.

"I never saw him before," said Michael, soothing the pup with a quiet hand. "He don't look as if he belonged to anyone."

"That makes it worse, doesn't it?" said Tom. "With no one to take care of him." And then: "Just a mutt."

The pup was licking Michael's hand; and it made an attempt to do the same for Tom.

"Yeah, he aint got any breeding," said the boy. "But there's some kind of terrier in him. Sometimes when they're like this they grow up to be very good dogs," he told Tom. "They're often jolly kind of little tykes. Mr. Filbert says they're what you call boys' dogs."

Tom smiled at this.

"You know, Michael," he said, "that was just what I was saying to myself when I first saw him. And just then, poor fellow, he was knocked over."

"He's not got any bones broken," said Michael. He'd been feeling the pup over carefully; his legs, his shoulders, his ribs, his hindquarters and back. There were some cuts, but not many or serious. Michael got out the kit which Mr. Filbert kept under the counter. He cleansed the cuts with hot water, and poured an antiseptic fluid upon each of them. This made the animal flinch; but Tom Denny patted him with a kindly hand.

"Poor little pooch!" said Tom.

And that was how the pup got his name. There were afterward a number of people who had a number of stories to tell of how Pooch came to

be so called, but Michael had the care of the pup for some time, and his account of it was the right one.

"The pup," said Michael, "when he was stretched out on the table and I was putting the antiseptic on his cuts, started to wriggle and whimper. Tom called him a pooch, and then he lay quiet, except his tail started to beat on the table. It was as if he knew the name. And afterward when Mrs. Filbert heard me call him by it, she laughed, and she said it was a comic name for a dog, but it just suited him. And so I always called him Pooch; and then everyone else got to doing the same."

Mr. Filbert came into the shop while Tom Denny was still there. And Tom told how the pup had been hurt in the street, and how he'd brought him in.

"Of course," said Tom, "there will be charges. I'd like to pay them."

Mr. Filbert protested, mildly; but Tom insisted; and finally they agreed that a sum of money would be paid each week. Mr. Filbert shook his head over the injured pup after Tom had gone; he was a kind man, but he also carried on a business and had to consider many things that he'd otherwise not have thought of.

"He'll get well," he told Michael. "In a couple of weeks, maybe less, he'll be on his four feet. Then what'll we do about him?"

"He looks good-tempered," said the boy. "Maybe somebody'll buy him, and give him a home."

"Nobody buys mongrels," said Mr. Filbert. "When people pay out money, they want breeding."

"He's going to have sense," said Michael. "I think he'll grow up to be a dog that'll understand things."

"Maybe so, maybe so," said Mr. Filbert. "But just the same, Michael, a dog-shop that must turn over a profit every month to keep going is no place for stray mongrels."

"He might turn out to be a good dog for rats," said Michael. "Because I can see somebody in his family was a terrier. We have rats in the barn, you know, and the cows are afraid of them; and sometimes they get in here after the birds. A dog loose around the place might keep them away."

"We'll see, we'll see," said Mr. Filbert. "But it'll not look well for us to sell high-priced dogs to customers and keep a mutt ourselves."

CHAPTER THREE

MICHAEL attended to Pooch while he was getting well of his hurts. He made a bed for him on the back porch; he dressed his cuts and fed him. And under Mr. Filbert's direction, he gave him a

fixed number of drops of medicine on a lump of sugar three times each day.

Every morning, as Tom Denny was passing, he'd stop to see how the pup was getting on. Pooch would wag his tail as the young man talked to him; he'd cock his ears and hold his head to one side, listening delightedly.

"He surely likes you, Tom," said Michael. "You picked him up out of the street when he was hurt, and he remembers it."

CHUG, the crow, now a veteran of nearly six years, who had gained enough favor around the place to be given the run of it, paid a good deal of attention to Pooch. He'd sit on the rail of the porch, his beady eyes full of curiosity.

"Look at the dog," he'd mutter to himself. "Ha-hal! Look at the dog."

At first Pooch, taken up with the pain of his hurts, didn't notice Chug; but as Michael's attention began to bring him back to normal, he had more time for other things. Now and then he'd lift his head and look at the crow in a puzzled kind of way.

"No, you don't understand that," Michael once said to him. "You know what birds are; but not birds that talk. This is one ahead of you, fellah."

There must have been something in this that caught Chug's attention. He stepped briskly around on the porch rail and shrieked:

"I'm a captain! I'm a captain!" Then he settled down once more, muttering: "I'm in the Army."

Michael laughed. He'd taught the bird to say this by repeating it over and over while working around the kennels with Chug perched near by. Bit by bit the crow picked up the sounds; he'd grumble and croak, and then began putting them together. Finally he mastered them, and as he sat on a strut of the awning-frame at the front of the store of an afternoon, he'd shout them to the amusement of the people passing, or the children who'd gather to hear him.

"He's always been clever," Michael once told Julia Havey as she stood laughing and listening, "but then his family are all that way: not only the crows, but the ravens, the magpies and the jays. They're knowing. They have curiosity; they like to find out things."

But Mr. Filbert had never got over his distrust of crows; he still thought them sly and mischievous. He condemned them roundly as robbers. He'd often shake his finger at Chug and tell him all he needed was proof of one single misdeed, and he'd pitch him out! To this, Chug'd listen attentively; and Michael was convinced he knew what that uplitted finger meant. At any rate, his conduct in and about the shop was perfect.

Of course Mr. Filbert carried on the dog-shop to get himself a living; and the more people were attracted to it, the better it was for him. And that's how Michael got his permission to bring Chug indoors in the first place.

"Always," said Michael, "when he sees someone, he begins to talk. And people like to hear him. Lots of them come into the store just because he's here."

Mr. Filbert saw reason in this; his wife, who fed the bird at the kitchen window every midday, and was fond of him, favored Michael's idea. And so Chug had been permitted to come in. When the sun left Main Street of an afternoon, he'd perch at the top of the window, or on the awning. He'd cheer passing cars, whistle at dogs who happened to pass by, and shout at the small boys.

"Look at the kids!" he'd cry, much to their enjoyment. Then he'd imitate the bell in the church steeple, make a series of sounds like pulling corks from bottles, and tell everybody he was in the Army, and that he was a captain.

One of his best bits was when the girls came streaming down Main Street from the high-school. He'd *chug-chug* like the knife-grinder's

motor; he'd bark, and ring the church bell furiously.

"Look at the girls!" he'd shout. "Ha-hal! Look at the girls!"

They'd crowd around the store front, and laugh and wave their handkerchiefs at him. Shopkeepers up and down the street would come to their doors to see what was going on.

"That bird," Sim Havey once told Mr. Filbert, "ought to be worth ten dollars a day to your place. He's the best and cheapest advertisement I know of."

Pooch, from his place on the back porch, could see the outdoor kennels and the big wired enclosures where the pigeons were kept; through the vines he could see the rabbit-hutches and the big cages of gray squirrels; through the screened back door of the shop he could see the singing birds, and the cats.

"He knows about all those things," Michael told Mrs. Filbert. "And I guess he understands them. But Chug's too much. A bird can fly; Pooch knows that. But when it starts to talk, that's something else. He's wondering about it."

And it was plain that Pooch was wondering about it. He was only three months old—maybe less than that; and up to that time he'd not seen many things. And dogs have to see things before they are settled in life and move about with confidence.

MAYBE it's incorrect to use the word *see* in telling about this—the word *smell* might be better. For a dog never feels satisfied about anything and never able to give it a place in his experience until he's smelled it. Sometimes, when Chug got near him, the pup would stretch his neck, and his sensitive black nose would quiver with expectation. But Chug never came near enough; he was a crow; and all crows, as Mr. Filbert said, are sly; and slyness and trust don't go together. So it was a long time before Pooch made up his mind about him.



As has been said, Tom Denny came in quite often; but one day, to Pooch's delight, someone came with him! It was Eileen Clement. Now, Pooch liked Tom; and he showed it in every possible way: fondness and gratitude shone in his eyes when the young man spoke to him. But at sight of Eileen, he sat up and yapped with joy.

"Why," said Tom, "the poor chap is quite overcome. Maybe I should have prepared him for your visit."

Eileen laughed; she patted the pup's head, and spoke to him. And at her touch, he became dumb; he wiggled frantically, but could make no sound; and finally he ceased to do that. He sat mute and motionless and adored her with his eyes.

"He's nice," said Eileen. "And the one black eye is funny, isn't it? But he's so fastened together with tape and bandages," she added pityingly, "that he must have been badly hurt."

"No," Michael assured her. "It does look bad, but it wasn't much. He had some cuts, but none of them were deep. I got Mr. Filbert to look at him yesterday, and he says he's getting along so well we stopped his medicine."

"Oh, now, that's very promising," said Eileen. "I suppose he's glad of that."

"Well, not too glad," said Michael. "Because he got sugar with it, and I think he misses it."

EILEEN laughed. She looked very beautiful. The boy thought she was beautiful at all times, but when she laughed, she was especially so. The sound aroused Chug, who was dozing on the porch rail; he shook himself in his feathers and muttered something about the Army and his position in it; but then realizing that it had been a laugh that awakened him, he laughed very loudly himself. Then seeing Eileen, he croaked:

"Oh, look at the girls! Ho, ho, ho!"

"The old rascal!" said Eileen, amused. "What an eye he has!"

"That's Michael's teaching," Tom said. "It's going all up and down the street that he's instructing the bird in all kinds of villainy."

Michael grinned.

"I've got to keep his mind busy," he told Eileen. "If I didn't, maybe he'd begin to think about the meadows far down along the sea, and he might want to go back there."

It was that very afternoon, after the visitors left, that Pooch made his first



Chug squawked and fought fiercely. The sudden sounds of combat brought Pooch from his sickbed.

step toward a friendship with Chug. The sun was still high; Michael had left a barrow on the side lawn, and the crow sat on one of its shafts, drowsing in the heat. The gate was open, and a strange dog made his way in, probably to see what sort of place this was, with its many animal smells. Almost at once he saw Chug, and leaped at him.

The crow fell in such a way that the shaft was between him and his enemy: and that is what saved him. But even so, the dog gripped him by the tail feathers. Chug squawked and fought fiercely. The sudden sounds of combat brought Pooch from his sickbed; the terrier strain that Michael had asserted was in him at once asserted itself. In an instant he changed from a sick pup into a warrior: and he tumbled down the steps of the porch and threw himself on the prowl.

Astonished to find himself attacked by a snarling juvenile who seemed to be all bound and pasted together, the strange dog let go his hold on Chug; and the crow, with a great flapping of wings, took to the top of the garage.

Michael ran out of the shop to see what was going on. He found Pooch yapping in high-pitched, broken tones, showing all his teeth and hobbling after the stranger, who was then disappearing through the gateway. And the boy gathered the pup admiringly into his arms.

"Keep quiet!" he ordered him. "You ran him off the place, didn't you? What more does a little shaver like you expect to do? And you're sick, too." He put him down on his bed and began to examine his bandages. "You know," said Michael, "if you're going to turn out to be a fighting dog, we'll have to get a chain and fasten you up. The first thing we know, if we let you loose, you'll be beating up all the dogs in the neighborhood, young fellow!"

AFTER Michael left him, Pooch lay still; but once in a while he growled to himself as though recalling the strange dog and what had happened. Chug kept to the top of the garage for some time; then after making quite sure all danger was past, he flew down and perched on the rail of the porch. He regarded Pooch first with one eye and then with the other; he muttered and grumbled and tried to settle himself to sleep. Failing in this, he reexamined the pup. Afterward he hopped down off the rail and fluttered into the garden, where he selected a favorable place and began to dig with his strong beak.

Finally he found a worm, and picking it up, he fluttered back to the porch and placed it beside Pooch's

bed. Pooch, much surprised to find the crow so close to him, sat up. He sniffed at the worm; then he sniffed at Chug. Afterward he looked first at one of them, then the other; then he stretched himself and yawned. The crow picked up the worm and put it in the pup's bed. Pooch, plainly, didn't care for worms in his bed, but at the same time he didn't care to hurt anyone's feelings; so he looked at Chug, his tongue lolling amiably.

The crow sharpened his beak a little on the porch floor, and shook the dust out of his feathers.

"I'm a captain," he told Pooch confidentially. "I'm in the Army."

Then, having imparted this information and transacted all immediate business, he hopped up on the rail and sat muttering to himself until he fell asleep.

CHAPTER FOUR

TOM DENNY lived on the hill just north of the town. It was a big house with grounds around it, with stables for jumping horses, with a four-car garage. For the Dennys had a good deal of means—the glass plant in the manufacturing town about ten miles away was theirs.

Eileen Clement's father was a judge in the superior court; the Clements were an older-established family than the Dennys, but hadn't so much money. They lived in the town, in one of the wide tree-shaded streets to the south, in a fine old house with wide windows and doors, immaculate with white paint and shining brass-work.

Only a year or so before, Tom had come back from college; and only at the beginning of that summer, Eileen had returned from another. They'd always known each other; and during this season they were together a good deal, riding and driving, tennis, canoeing, golf. And it was beginning to be openly said they were engaged, though no announcement had been made.

When the matter was mentioned to Tom's mother, she said:

"The boy is careful. He thinks a good deal of Eileen, but he does not want to marry her and then leave her."

"Do you mean the Army?" said the woman who had broached the subject of the engagement to Mrs. Denny. She seemed quite startled.

"Yes. He told me if this trouble, which seems to be coming nearer all the time, actually grows serious, he's going to apply for a commission and go into one of the training-camps."

"But—poor Eileen!"

"Eileen has plenty of good sense," said Mrs. Denny. "She'll wait for

him, just as thousands of other girls will wait."

"But if—"

"I know," said Mrs. Denny. "No one ever finishes that question. You mean, what if he doesn't come back?" And her voice was quite calm and steady as she went on: "A great many of them, if they are needed and go, will not come back. We'll have to make up our minds to that."

And if his mother had little fear of the thing, Tom had less. As a matter of fact, his blood stirred at the thought of a possible struggle. Of course, he didn't want to see war come upon the country, but, if it did, there was nothing like being ready and jumping in without any hesitation.

There was a good deal of talk through the town; all the young men were getting ready to have their names set down in the records. All the older boys were fretting and telling each other it was a wrong thing to bar them out. Even Michael, standing in the midst of his fourteenth year, was restless.

"I'm as big as some of the fellows that're twenty," he told Mr. Filbert. "I've had plenty outdoor work, and I'm strong. What's the matter with me telling them I'm older than I am?"

But Mr. Filbert wouldn't listen to this.

"If you're needed, your time will come," he said. "Then you can join up. There's going to be a lot of work to do, and somebody'll have to stay behind to do it."

Some days later, Michael said he didn't think it was right to have so few flags flying in the town.

"Suppose," he suggested, "we rig a pole on the roof and run a Stars and Stripes up on it? And besides that, we ought to get an eagle somewhere and put it in the window. Maybe two of them. It's coming on war-time, and we aint got half enough eagle in it."

MR. FILBERT liked the idea of the flagpole on the roof; but he shook his head at the eagles.

"Of course, they are the birds of freedom, and I admire them," he said. "But to see a pair of them sitting cooped up in a cage will look very little like freedom. So we'd best not have them."

Chug, who was stalking about on the awning, whistled at a passing dog, and rang a number of bells; also he shrieked at an astonished small boy who sat on the front seat of a farmer's wagon, and told him he was a captain and was in the Army.

Michael laughed as he listened.

"I'm glad I taught him that," he said. "It might get some bigger fellows thinking."

Pooch was now well on the road to recovery. Indeed, his hurts were healed, and good feeding had filled out the hollow places in his frame.

POOCH had also begun to move about the place and get acquainted with it. He'd sit with his tongue out, listening to the songs of the birds; he regarded the cats with amused toleration; he played with the kittens through the bars of their cages. He followed Michael about, very interested in his doings; and he got in the habit of joining Chug at the kitchen window at feeding-time.

"And the bird don't make any fuss about it," said Mrs. Filbert, surprised. "I'd have thought he'd drive him away."

"I would too," Michael said. "But you see, Pooch did him a favor." He told about the strange dog, and the brawl in the backyard. Mrs. Filbert was more surprised than ever, while her husband chuckled and seemed very well pleased.

"The little fellow seems to have pluck," Mr. Filbert said. "I always like to see it; it's a good sign."

"And do you really think that old imp of a crow feels a thing like gratitude?" said Mrs. Filbert, her eyes open wide.

"Well, it's some kind of a thing—maybe not gratitude, exactly, but a thing that might be called that." Mr. Filbert twiddled his thumbs, and leaned back in his chair. "In my many years with animals I've noticed some odd things," he said. "They often have a regard for each other. Real kindness and helpfulness, you might call it."

Pooch, about this time, began exploring the neighborhood; he kept to the sidewalk, for his memory of what had happened to him in the street was still sharp and unpleasant. He was well known at the butcher's; the greengrocer also became acquainted with him, as did the baker. He had many friends at the barber's, and the pool-room. When Michael thought Pooch had been long enough away, he'd go outdoors and whistle—in which summons, Chug joined with great vigor. And at once the pup would appear from somewhere and come galloping joyously home.

But one day he didn't appear. At its end he was still absent. With darkness coming on, Michael visited all his places of resort, but no one had seen him. Sometime after nightfall the telephone rang. Mr. Filbert answered it. It was Tom Denny.

"I want to tell you I'm having Pooch as a guest overnight," he said.

"No!" said Mrs. Filbert. "So that's where he's been!"

"He must have followed my car," said Tom. "I saw him in Main Street

and saluted him, as one friend will another. I don't know how he did it, for I hit a pretty fast pace when I got outside town. But anyway, here he is. I'll bring him in in the morning."

What happened was that Pooch had followed the car as far as he could by sight, and afterward by scent.

Michael had always seen traces of the terrier breed in him; but also there must have been a beagle somewhere in his ancestry, for he had an excellent nose. He trailed the car along the roads to the Denny place, and then in at the entrance with the big stone pillars. It was now dark. He was breathless, but quite sure he was right. Almost at the outset he encountered two tall Afghan hounds, each with a wide collar about its neck. They towered, one on each side of him, in dusky magnificence, and looked down at him disdainfully.

He was his usual friendly self, though he was not quite sure how matters were with him. He spent a moment or two in salutations, and then attempted to pass on his way. But the Afghans growled at him. One of them nipped him. He yelped loudly, as much because of surprise as of pain; and then he crouched facing them in the dimness, baring his teeth and ready for battle.

But before he had a chance to proceed further in the matter there was a voice—a girl's voice—asking what was wrong, and bidding the hounds behave.

"What have you there, you bad boys?" said the girl. "Not a rabbit, I hope." Then a thin pencil of very bright light picked out the three: the Afghans were very stately and dignified; Pooch was now standing on his hindlegs and pawing delightedly in the air with his fore ones. "Well, my goodness!" said the girl.

Then there was a man's voice.

"Eileen!" it called.

"Yes, Tom."

"What's happening?" Evidently the man was approaching, for the voice sounded nearer.

"I was walking along in the dark with the dogs, and they suddenly pounced on something. I turned my flash on, and found it was the little hurt pup from Mr. Filbert's shop."

"Not Pooch!" The voice was much nearer, and there was surprise in it. Before Tom Denny could say anything, there was a scurrying and a jumping. Pooch was yelping again, but this time with joy. "Where did you come from, you rascal?" laughed Tom, taking hold of him and patting him. "Why, I saw you in Main Street only awhile ago."

"He followed you," said Eileen, holding the flashlight on Pooch; "and how glad he is to see you!"

"A nice little fellow," said Tom.

The two tall Afghans, seeing the reception Pooch was getting, changed their minds about him. They crowded in and sniffed at him; and, good little chap that he was, he forgave them instantly and proceeded to get on friendly terms with them.

They went back to the house, and it was then that Tom called Mr. Filbert.

Tom's mother had heard all about Pooch, and when they told her how he'd followed the car, she made up her mind he must be hungry.

"He's not only a brave little dog, but he's intelligent," she said. "And I'll have Caesar feed him, and make a bed for him somewhere."

The colored butler, who was a stout, jolly person and knew how to manage dogs, fed Pooch until he'd eat no more; but he consulted Tom about his lodgings.

"I could put him in the kennel with them Afghan twins, Mr. Tom," he said, "but you know them two dogs is awful high-nosed. Maybe they'd not like him."

"Try them with him," suggested Tom.

"One of them bit him," said Caesar. "I just put a little stuff on the place so's to help it along."

The two tall hounds were already in the kennel, which was large and open on one side. And Caesar was pleased to see that they accepted the pup good-naturedly enough.

"That young dog's got winning ways," chuckled the butler as he fastened the kennel gate. "I seen that right away when I was getting ready to feed him."

IN the Denny household that evening after dinner, there was a good deal of serious talk; and more of it later in the car while Tom was driving Eileen home. And more still while the two young people stood on the wide porch of the Clement house before Eileen went in. Tom was going away. Late next day he was to take a train for Washington; and after that he was going to the training-camp.

"Father used to say those two years I put in as a kid at the military school were wasted," he said with a laugh. "But they weren't. They're going to be some good now; they'll save me a lot of drudgery."

"I'll go with your mother to see you off," said Eileen. "And we'll visit you in a few weeks."

"That'll be fine," he said. "But I'll be back every now and then for a while. It might be some time before I'm thought to be ready, and am assigned to service."

"I was talking with Father this afternoon," said Eileen, "and he said it was good judgment to go into the Ma-

rines when you made up your mind you'd like that best."

"In that branch they always see service," said Tom. "And that's what I want. Who knows, I might get into a detachment that'll be sent somewhere without waiting for war actually to break."

"You're anxious to go, aren't you, Tom?" said the girl softly.

"I'm one of the four or five millions who will be needed," he told her. "These United States make up a wonderful country, Eileen; it's given us a good deal—all of us. And now the time's coming when we can return some of it."

And next morning, when Tom drove down Main Street, he not only stopped at the dog-shop to return Pooch but also to bid Mr. Filbert and Michael good-by.

"I'll be at one of the training-stations for a while," he told them. "And I'll be seeing you at odd times, maybe. Take care of yourselves," he said. "And take care of the pooch." He patted the pup's head and pulled his ears. "When I come back, we'll settle what we're going to do with him. And until then, I'll say for him. He's a nice little guy, and I don't want to see any harm come to him."

CHAPTER FIVE

ON the evening that Tom Denny went away, his mother and Eileen were at the little station. And Michael was there with Pooch, who for the first time was held in check by a leather thong. Michael knew railroad stations were no places for pups to be loose. As the train moved away with Tom on board, Michael shouted and Pooch barked. Then the boy helped Mrs. Denny and Eileen into their car and saw them start for home; and afterward he and Pooch went down the lane that took them into Main Street.

"There'll be lots of soldiers, fella," the boy told the pup as they went along the dark way. "There'll be marching, and drums beating, and things like that. But did you know Tom aint going to be what you call a regular soldier? He's going to be in the Marines." How Pooch took this, Michael didn't know, because in the darkness he couldn't see him at all; he only knew he was there by the way he pulled on the lead.

"And he does it nice and steady, too," thought Michael. "You'd think he'd beef walking with a lead for some time; he knows just how it ought to be done."

But the boy went on thinking about Tom Denny and the Marines. He began to whistle "And the Caissons Go Rolling Along," keeping step

with the tune all the way down the dim lane. And he was thinking what a wonderful thing it would be on a night just like this—only it'd be better if it were raining—to be one of a column of Marines, marching into a strange town in some far-away place; to have your overcoat all buttoned up, your heavy shoes splashing in the water, a drum tapping a little way ahead, and the men sort of murmuring that song as they went marching along.

"Mrs. Denny didn't cry," Michael reported to Mrs. Filbert when he reached home. "Neither did Eileen. I think that's the way everybody ought to be, don't you?"

Mrs. Filbert didn't say anything; she had no boy to send to the Army, and perhaps she was wondering what she would do if she had. But Mr. Filbert agreed with Michael.

"It's hard enough for a young man to be going away like that, without a lot of lamentations," he said. "Just to say good-by to him is enough, and maybe wish him good luck. There are some who might say a little prayer to themselves. That also, I think, would be all right."

"Tom waved his hand to Pooch," laughed Michael. "The little codger almost jumped out of his skin, he was that pleased. And he barked so loud you could hear him above the noise of the train."

Tom Denny was the first of the young men in that section to put on a uniform; but later there were a great many. Michael was uneasy as he noticed them disappear, one after another; and he interviewed Mr. Sawyer, of the draft board.

"There was Harvey Goodman," Michael said to Mr. Sawyer; "he's not as heavy as I am, and he's shorter; but just because he's six years older, he's taken, and I'm not."

Mr. Sawyer smiled. It was plain that he liked Michael's pluck.

"In less than four years you'll be eighteen," he said. "Then you can enlist."

"But," protested Michael, "the war will be over by that time."

"I hope it will," said Mr. Sawyer gravely. "And I hope, even if you live to be eighty, you'll not get another chance."

Michael understood this; but he said:

"Well, of course, I know a war's a bad thing to have. But at the same time, when we've got one, why not let them help that wants to?"

"We've got to have rules," said Mr. Sawyer. "We couldn't work without them. And once they're made, we've got to stick to them."

Mr. Filbert had been in the Spanish War, and that night at dinner he talked about it.

"I was twenty, and was among the first lot sent to Cuba," he said. "It wasn't much of a war. There was more sickness than bullets. But there was one thing it taught us: we'd have to have more ships, more of an army, more of everything. If we didn't, we knew we wouldn't be able to get along at all."

AND it was after he'd been discharged at the end of the war that Mr. Filbert turned to keeping a dog-shop.

"I don't think," said Mrs. Filbert, laughing, "you ever told Michael how you came to do that."

Mr. Filbert smiled. He had a round kind of smile; there was a good deal of boy in it, and when it showed on his face there was always a dancing, brightening something in his eyes.

"No," he said, "I don't think I ever mentioned that to Michael."

"Well," said Michael, "what say if you tell it to me now?"

"It was in the spring of the year," said Mr. Filbert. "In April. We'd just been married, and we'd taken a little house in the city. We'd been visiting some friends who lived away in the north end, and when we started for home in the street-car, it was quite late. And it began to rain."

"The most awful rain," said Mrs. Filbert. "It just poured. I don't think I ever saw anything like it before."

"When we left the car," said Mr. Filbert, "we were still three blocks from home, that being as far as it would take us. We stood under the canvas awning over the door of a grocer's place, and watched the rain falling. It was so thick and heavy we could see through it only a short distance. And by and by Mrs. Filbert says to me:

"Is there something over there?"

"Where?" I said.

"In the street. See," she says, "it's moving. It's coming toward us. It must be a small dog or a cat."

"I saw it then," said Mr. Filbert to Michael. "It was an animal of some sort, and not very large. And it was coming toward us, but very slowly," said Mr. Filbert. "It was making hardly any headway at all because of the wind and rain."

"It was a cat," said Mrs. Filbert. "And the poor thing, it was almost drowned."

"It was a cat," agreed Mr. Filbert, "and it had a kitten with it. It was holding the little creature by the scruff of the neck, the way mother cats always carry their kittens; both of them were streaming with water, and were in a most wretched condition."

"The cat jumped up on the curb, out of the street," said Mr. Filbert; "it carried the kitten to a dry spot

under the grocer's awning, and put it down. It was just as though she'd made up her mind that was all she could do. The fight was too bitter and hard for her; she had to give it up. She looked up at us, with the kitten there at our feet, and mewed, as though telling us we'd now have to take over. And then she went away—where, I don't know.

"Mrs. Filbert picked the kitten up and rubbed the rain from it with her handkerchief. To me, it seemed only a limp little bit of wet fur, very dirty and forlorn. I said there was no life in it; but she said she thought there was. So she wrapped it up in a woolen scarf and warmed it in her arms as well as she could."

"By and by," said Mrs. Filbert, "the rain was not so bad, and we got home. I dried the poor little creature by the fire; and I fed it warm milk with a medicine-dropper. And," she said to Michael, "you never saw anything prosper the way it did. They say," and she smiled, "cats have nine lives. I suppose that little thing had only one, but it was a life that burned very brightly."

"What became of it?" asked the boy.

"We kept it until it was maybe four months old. And it was the oddest cat I'd ever known," said Mrs. Filbert. "You remember what I said about Chug when you brought him home a long time ago, and he only a nestling. I said that he'd take things and hide them, and that he'd make trouble."

"Well, that kitten would roam about the backyards and would pick things up and bring them home. We were forever asking the neighbors, 'Is this your handkerchief? Is this your glove?' or whatever it might be. Once the little rascal got into Dr. Streeter's place and brought home a sleeve-link that like as not was very valuable. I inquired around and found it belonged to the Doctor. He laughed when I told him the story, and he bought the little outlaw from me for ten dollars."

"I was out of a job at the time," said Mr. Filbert, "and I'd always liked animals. The sale of the kitten gave me an idea. I'd take what little money I had and deal in the sort of small creatures people liked. And finally I came here. Rents were lower, and I'd have more room; and I could make business by advertising."

CHAPTER SIX

TOM DENNY came back once or twice; then suddenly news came that he'd been sent overseas.

"Didn't have time to do any more than telephone his mother and Ei-



Pooch encountered two tall Afghan hounds. They looked down at him disdainfully. He spent a moment in salutations.

leen," Michael reported, when he brought the news to Mr. and Mrs. Filbert. "He's joining a destroyer at San Francisco, or some place on the West Coast. And he said they were to go to one of the naval bases in the East."

Eileen stopped at the shop one day. She petted Pooch and praised him for growing into such a nice six-months-old pup.

"Of course, you were always nice, sonny," Eileen told him, "but you're growing nicer all the time."

Now when she'd left the dog-shop, Pooch trotted along behind her, she not knowing. And that's how he found out where she lived. Often after that she'd find him lying under the tree at the front of the house, or sitting on the porch waiting for her.

Mrs. Denny told her he'd haunted their place until he was convinced Tom was no longer there.

"And now," Mrs. Denny said, "he's going to be a regular visitor with you."

"It really would seem," laughed Mrs. Filbert, when this came to her, "that the pup knows those two were engaged."

"Well," said Michael, "I guess he don't know exactly that; but he knows there's something. For he did seem

to always have them together in his mind. He's a wiser pup than any others we've got, even if he is only a mutt."

Mr. Filbert nodded his head over this.

"It's often that way: Well-bred dogs are handsomer and maybe better in a good many ways. But they are sometimes dull-witted. The mongrel, it often happens, has something new to offer that's interesting."

SOMETIME later when Michael had gone into the store to attend to a sick monkey, Mr. Filbert said:

"You know, I didn't want Pooch at first, and I'd never have consented to have him if it hadn't been for something I noticed the day he was hurt."

"What was that?" asked Mrs. Filbert.

There were often little things her husband hadn't told her. And she was always interested in finding out what they were.

"While I was in the shop and Tom was still there, Michael was fixing up the pup's hurts, and I remember thinking to myself: 'We can't have an animal like this around the place. What shall we do with him?'"

"Oh, now!" said Mrs. Filbert, who was tender-hearted.

"Not that I didn't pity him, and wouldn't do what I could to help him," said Mr. Filbert earnestly. "But as I said, we're expected to have blooded dogs in the shop, and a mongrel'd be out of place. Anyway, while I was thinking that, he lifted his poor head and looked at me. And," said Mr. Filbert, "that was it."

"That was what?" asked his wife.

"That's what made me agree to have him. When he looked at me, he reminded me of something," said Mr. Filbert. "He made me think of Michael, when he was only five years old and when I first saw him. The first time he looked at me, it was in the same way."

"Filbert," said his wife, "I think you have too much imagination. But at the same time," she said, "I think you are a very nice person."

"And do you know," said Mr. Filbert seriously, "I've kept a good deal of that feeling about those two. I like Pooch, and if Michael were my own son, I couldn't think more of him. Michael has a fine nature. Just look at him tonight, going to the shop to make sure that little monkey is comfortable and getting on. That little beast, measuring him by money, isn't worth more than a few dollars. But he might be human, the way the boy looks after him. And when Michael goes to the cage, the poor sick little chap gets up at once and goes to him. Michael's a friend, and it knows it. He's somebody with a kind heart in his body. It knows that, too. Michael's ideas about things of that kind," said Mr. Filbert, "are not to be put aside without thought. I've often felt that while animals can't reason, they have ways of putting things together and often get some kind of a result."

QUITE a number of songbirds were brought in about this time.

Mr. Filbert always took these small musicians readily. They were nice to have around the place; and also they were very profitable. People admired them and bought them with pleasure. There were some swamp sparrows, with their clear, full little voices; also quite a collection of thrushes, warblers and larks. Michael was all smiles as they housed the newcomers.

"I've been waiting for a few warblers," he told Mr. Filbert. "Because I've got to brush up on my whistling. Somehow of late I've gone a little flat."

"I'm surprised that you are thinking of warblers when we've now got some fine one-year-old mockingbirds," said Mr. Filbert.

"I've been looking at them," said the boy; "but I had to give up on mockers some time ago. There's no

use trying with them; they're too good. After I've whistled with them for a while, I feel I don't know how to whistle at all. And along with that, they often stop and listen to me, and then they imitate me. They whistle exactly the way I do, and then," grinned Michael, "I see just how bad I am."

THE little monkey was recovering; Michael had a strap around his waist, and a small linked chain fastened him to a tree in the sideyard. He had plenty of sun and air. Michael gave him cool milk, and now and then an orange, or sometimes a banana. Chug took a great interest in the monkey, and had picked up some of the things Michael said while attending him. The crow would sit on a low limb of the tree and look down at the patient.

"Poor little guy!" he'd say. "Ha, ha, ha! How's your stomach, fellah?"

Most times when Michael went out on a journey along the roads, he took the bicycle. But when he had Pooch with him, he walked.

"He's only about six months old," said the boy, "and he's not up to long runs. When he's got a year or so on him, he'll go along all right, and then we'll travel farther."

Pooch liked these outings. The dog-shop, the barn, and tool-house, at home had been gone over many times, and were very usual. So had the streets of the neighborhood, and the places he'd got into the habit of visiting.

The road to Judge Clement's house was still very attractive. He'd made friends with Honey, a little spaniel which was quite old and short of breath; also with the cook, who gave him little snacks to eat, but at the same time warned him not to track mud on the porch or the newly-scrubbed steps. There was a fat old housecat there who'd looked at him suspiciously for some time, but by and by she made up her mind he meant no harm and became very friendly.

The two Afghans at the Dennys', now that Tom had gone away, were lonely, and received Pooch very well. They didn't care much about going out for walks with the butler, for he was too slow; and the boy who worked about the place, when he'd go with them, spent most of the time talking with other boys at fence-corners, or in front of garages. And this was dull. When Pooch came on a visit, they cheered up, and he played running games with them around the enclosure where they were kept.

These things were nice; but a six-months-old pup needs a variety of experiences; and that's what he got when he went out on a hike with

Michael. For Michael didn't keep to the roads. He crossed fields; he went through patches of woods; he followed rabbit-tracks; he looked for nests; he whistled in imitation of the wild birds that were everywhere around. He'd sing. Sometimes he'd run, and Pooch would gallop joyfully ahead of him.

Michael always carried a canvas bag slung from his shoulder. There were cuts of cold meat in this, and bread, and some dog-biscuit made in the shape of bones. These always pleased Pooch; he'd lie down and gnaw at one with his strong white teeth, making believe it was a natural bone, and getting a good deal of satisfaction from it.

Also in this bag Michael would carry a book. Not always the same book, but it was sure to be about plants, or birds or animals. And when they stopped to rest, or to have their lunch, he'd get the book out and read some of it. Often he'd talk to Pooch about these matters.

There was one book about the great family of finches. Michael especially liked this: all small birds, and mostly singing birds. Then there was another about swifts, who live on the sides of cliffs, or in chimneys; and also there were the hummingbirds, and the wonderful family of swallows. Michael studied these books; sometimes he'd sit leaning against the bole of a tree, looking up into the sky, or into the treetops; and Pooch would lie beside him, his head on the boy's knee.

Michael was mostly interested in those plants that were made little use of; he saw many weeds which had tall shapes, sturdy stems and leaves and flowers that promised a good deal of beauty to anyone who'd take the trouble to work with them. He liked to hunt out beds of useful herbs. He'd sometimes gather the leaves and bark of the rattle-bush, and the roots of the trumpet-weed, also wintergreen and wormgrass, and other things that were helpful to animals when they were not in health.

But especially Michael liked the air that blew across the meadows and fields as they approached the sea. He liked the sun; he liked the high blue sky and the great formations of cloud that drifted across it; he drew in deep breaths. He felt like a king's son in a folk-story as he wandered along, seeing and feeling and enjoying.

POOCH was not without his own enjoyments. Things in the grass interested him. There were so many of them; and always some he'd never seen before. A gorgeous bug, gold and green, or maybe red and yellow, or blue and gold, looking like a jewel drifting in the wind, would hold his attention; then a dusty toad would

appear out of a clump of green growth. A bumblebee, good-natured and plump, and beautiful in his shining metallic coat, would pass with flashing wings; a gaunt gray grasshopper would leap suddenly into view, maybe causing Pooch to draw back in alarm. There were field mice whose nimble smallness caused the pup to sit down, open his eyes and loll out his tongue in admiration.

Pooch had always approved of the birds in the shop; he liked to look at them and listen to their songs, and they were bright and friendly. But here in the fields and woods their cousins and brothers were different; their lives were wild and free. They perched high in the trees; they sat on the fences; they flashed through the sunlight like light-rays.

Robins, thrashers, blackbirds: now and then a hawk was seen soaring high in the sky. Once, while Michael was digging up the roots of a water-plant at the edge of a pond, Pooch saw a long-legged crane silently fishing; also he saw a heron lift itself upon wide wings above the water and float slowly away.

Pups at the age of six months are in the midst of their learning. They've been hunting and sniffing long before that; their curiosity has been awake and taking them here and there, searching and prying. But at six months, they've begun to understand; they've begun to put this thing and that thing together, and to get a meaning out of them.

And so the open country was a wonderful place for Pooch. Not at all like the town, where there were so many things and places you must keep out of. Here he could roam pretty much as he pleased. All he had to do was keep one ear up so he'd be sure to hear when Michael called. Of course there were times when he was busily engaged and had to be called twice—and sometimes more than twice. But Michael understood, and didn't get impatient; Michael knew about dogs, especially young dogs. And often, when Pooch found it hard to leave some interesting sight, sound or smell, Michael would come to see what it was. And maybe he'd talk to Pooch about it.

There was the time when Pooch saw a slim green lizard on a tree-trunk, quite close to the ground. It was a new creature to him, and he approached to smell it. But it had disappeared! Surprised, he went about, searching; then he saw it on the other side of the trunk. He took one step toward it, and again it disappeared.

Michael saw the pup stalking cautiously around the tree, and laughed. "You'll not do much there, fellah," he said. "He's too quick for you."

Pooch went round and round the tree; he never had more than a glimpse of the slim, darting creature, but he persisted until the boy called him away.

A flight of crows *caw-cawing* deep in the sky caught the pup's attention in one place, and Michael saw him staring up at them.

"Yes," the boy said, "that might be Chug's family; but don't expect any conversation from them. They never went to school and don't know any words."

And in the late afternoon they'd start for home. Sometimes if they were lucky, they'd get a ride for a few miles on a farm wagon, or a truck, or in the car of someone Michael knew. All this was experience for Pooch. He barked and wagged his tail and looked interested and good-humored; and afterward he'd eat his supper with enjoyment, and sleep soundly.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ONE afternoon, after returning from one of these trips, Michael found Eileen Clement at the dog-shop. She seemed to be excited and worried; she was talking with Mr. Filbert, and he greeted Michael with much relief as the boy came in, Pooch at his heels.

"Here's Michael now," he said. And then: "Michael, Miss Clement's dog has disappeared."

"What, old Honey gone!" said Michael. "Why, she's too settled to wander away."

"That's just it, Michael," said Eileen. "I can't think she's gone away anywhere. She never has done so. But we've looked everywhere for her and can't find her."

"Suppose you go out with Miss Clement and have a look around," said Mr. Filbert to Michael.

"Yes, I will," said the boy readily.

"My car's outside, Michael," said Eileen.

"We'll go before it gets dark," he said. He whistled for Pooch. "He was good friends with Honey," he told Eileen. "He might be some help."

Pooch scrambled into the car with them, and they set out. They found Judge Clement much disturbed about the disappearance of the little spaniel.

"I've gone over everything," he said. "I've looked everywhere we looked before, and some places we must have missed."

"Michael has come, thinking he might be of some help," said Eileen.

"I don't see what you can do," Judge Clement said to the boy. "Though it's very kind of you. The strange part of it is that the little thing should disappear so completely,

and so suddenly. She was in the garden—and in the next few moments she was gone."

"As quickly as that?" said Michael. "Well, that makes it pretty sure she's not far away. But we'll look around."

Judge Clement told him Honey had been lying asleep in the shadow of the hedge at the far side of the garden. Michael knew when dogs seemed to be asleep they were often far from being so. Honey, he felt sure, had not been, and had suddenly got up; something had caught her attention, and she'd gone to learn what it was. He told Eileen it shouldn't be much trouble to find her.

"Well, I hope not, Michael. For Honey was Mother's dog," said Eileen. "She loved her! And because of that, Father takes the greatest care of her."

"Well," said Michael, "just stop worrying. Let Pooch and me take over. We'll be able to tell you something in a little while."

Judge Clement had gone into the house, and now Eileen followed him. Michael stood on the spot indicated by the Judge as the place where he'd last seen Honey, and he looked around. He saw a break in the line of privet a few yards away. And he called to Pooch and pointed to it. Pooch sniffed at the opening and looked at Michael.

"Honey," said Michael. "Get Honey!"

Pooch barked. He sniffed again, and seemed puzzled. After all, he was only a pup, and with no training. Michael picked him up, and dropped him over the hedge. "Search," he directed. "Get Honey."

Pooch didn't understand. But he wanted to. He ran about and barked. He stood on his hindlegs and pawed at Michael as he leaned over the hedge.

"All right, fellah," said the boy. "I guess it's too much to expect you to work like an expert in your first lesson. I'll have to help you."

Michael asked the cook if there was something of Honey's he could have for a while; and she gave him a little knitted coat that the spaniel had worn in rough weather. So Michael helped over the hedge with this, and held it out to Pooch.

"Smell," he said. "Take a good sniff."

Pooch put his nose in the coat and sniffed vigorously. Then he looked at the boy inquiringly.

"Honey!" said Michael. "Where's Honey? Find Honey. Search."

And now Pooch understood. This was about Honey. He galloped about in his clumsy pup fashion, and barked. He was calling the little spaniel; Michael wanted her! He was racing toward that part of the

hedge nearest to the kitchen door, but he was called back.

"Search," ordered Michael. "Find Honey." He pointed to the break in the hedge; Pooch sniffed at this, and it was plain he knew Honey had been there. He looked at Michael with wagging tail and lolling tongue. The boy gestured along the ground. "Honey," he said. "Find Honey."

Obediently the pup began sniffing at the ground. He was greatly interested. It was a new game. He ran here and there, sniffing; but it had no result that Michael could see. Of course, it was a good deal to expect of a six-months-old dog, one not a real hound in the bargain. Michael stood watching him. And then, some twenty feet or so away, he saw the pup stop. The barking ceased. Pooch seemed puzzled. He'd look at the ground; he'd look around him. Once Michael saw him look up into a tree. And he was no longer sniffing and trying to find a trail.

"Why," said Michael, "he seems to be listening!"

The pup scratched at the ground; he walked about, but always returned to the same spot.

"Where's Honey?" Michael asked him. "Find Honey."

Pooch yelped. It was a new note. It had excitement in it. The pup ran to Michael and pawed at him. Then he ran back to the place where he'd been scratching. Michael followed him. He looked for tracks, but found none.

"But," he said to himself, "he's not found any, either." He studied Pooch, who was lying beside him. "He's not looking for tracks. He hasn't been looking for any since he reached this spot. He's listening."

And so Michael listened also.

THERE were sounds from the house; a truck was rolling along the road and making most of the sounds trucks make. There were bird sounds. But Pooch was giving no attention to these. His head was resting on his front paws, and his ears were lifted. Michael became impatient.

"Look, fellow," he said, "are you hearing something? Is it Honey?"

Pooch lifted his head and yelped sharply; his tail beat excitedly on the ground. But almost at once he went into his old posture. Again he was listening.

"If there is anything, he seems to hear it best that way," said Michael. He stretched himself out on the ground beside Pooch and listened. But his ears caught nothing unusual.

Tired, at length, of holding his head in a strained position, he rested it on the ground. And then he thought he heard something. It was

a plaintive sound, muffled, anxious, pleading. Michael sat up and considered. Then he got to his feet, walked the length of the hedge and in at the gate. Judge Clement sat at an open window.

"What luck, Michael?" he asked.

"There may be something," said Michael. "Is there a drainage line outside the hedge running along that side?"—indicating.

"Yes, there is."

"And does it turn off at an angle about there where the stonework begins?"

"I believe it does," said the Judge. "I remember hearing Dick Henry saying he'd best turn it there."

"Did Mr. Henry put it in?"

"Yes: a half-dozen years ago."

There was a sudden sound in the room, and Eileen came to the window.

"Michael," she said, "do you think Honey has got into the drain?"

"Yes, I do. I think she followed some small animal, maybe a field-mouse, through that broken place in the hedge. There's an opening in the drain there, with the grating off, and I think she followed whatever it was into that and along the line of the pipe."

He told them of the actions of Pooch.

"He heard something down below," he went on; "I listened and heard it too. Like the whining of a dog."

"Poor Honey!" cried Eileen.

"We'll have the drain opened at once," said the Judge, rising.

"That's what I was going to ask you about," said Michael. "Suppose I call Henry's? Maybe I could get Jimmy to come up."

The Judge willingly gave his consent to this. So Michael got Jimmy Henry on the telephone and told him what he thought had happened to Honey.

"I'll throw some tools into the car and be there in ten minutes," said Jimmy, who was a brisk, willing young fellow. "You know there might be gas enough in that pipe to suffocate the poor little tyke."

Jimmy Henry was a lad of his word, for it was no more than ten minutes before a small truck drew up in front of the Clement house, and Jimmy got out. Michael went out to help him with the shovels and picks and other things he'd brought.

"You know," said Jimmy, who was a redhead and of a chunky build, "I've heard of things like this. The dog gets into the drain after a rabbit or some other thing, and he goes some distance through the pipe until he comes to a curve, and he can't turn round in the pipe to get back. And there he is—stuck. He's only a dog,

and don't think of coming out backward. So all he can do is call for help; and when you're calling from some place underground," went on Jimmy, "it's only an accident if someone hears you."

Pooch was still lying on the spot where he'd heard the sounds from underground. Jimmy Henry patted him, admiringly.

"Six months old," said Jimmy, "and already you're somebody. Well, it's not many dogs they can say that about, Pooch, old-timer."

They managed to get the pup out of the way, though he plainly didn't want to go; and then they set to work digging. At about the depth of a foot they came to a line of terra cotta pipe. Here was the curve, just as they'd expected; and they could now hear the whining of Honey quite plainly.

"Oh, the poor little thing!" said Eileen. "How dreadful it must be for her!"

"We'll have her out in a little while," said Michael.

POOCH heard the whining of the trapped spaniel, and he barked and hopped around. He'd watched the opening of the ground with much approval; he seemed to know that this was necessary. But now, the sounds from Honey striking on his ears more plainly than before, he leaped into the opening and began to claw at the drain-pipe. Both boys laughed.

"Young fellow," said Jimmy Henry, "you must be friends with that dog in there."

"Oh, he is," said Eileen. "Honey's a nice little dog, and he's very fond of her."

"Well, anyway," Michael said to Pooch, "while we like your style, you'll have to jump out of here and let the work go on."

They cleared away the soil from the drain-pipe, and Jimmy bent down and listened.

"She's in this length just next the curve," he told Michael. "So we'd better not do anything to that. We might hurt her."

"What say if we crack the curved piece?" asked Michael.

"Yes, I think that's better."

So Jimmy took up a hammer which lay at the edge of the cut and with a couple of skillful blows had cracked the elbow joint. And then Michael began to remove the pieces.

Almost at once Pooch lifted his voice in delighted barking. For Honey had put her head out at the opened end of the drain. In a moment Michael had drawn her out and Eileen, in spite of the bedraggled condition of the little animal, clasped it in her arms.

The next installment of this novel by John McIntyre will appear in our forthcoming August issue.

What Do You Think?

A Readers' Forum

COMPULSORY TRAINING?

JUST a year ago next Sunday I was married. Today I sit in a small furnished room looking at my wife. She lies on the bed across from me, crying—because she knows and I know that at any moment I may be summoned to board a transport.

It hardly sounds sensible. A year ago I was a young chemist, getting married, planning new research—even beginning to read the financial pages of the daily paper. All of that seems so far away now. For the last ten months—we had less than two months of peace—we have been harried and hurried from one post to the other. I was an officer to begin with, but we have moved on the average of once every six weeks.

Well, it may be a bit rough on us right now, but what is going to happen to us after this is all over? I know all the platitudes. I was brought up on them. Remember that I was educated in the Terrible Thirties. All through high school and college I made a lot of enemies by refusing to accept either Communism or Fascism, but since I attacked the infantile pacifism then rampant, I was accused of favoring both totalitarian doctrines.

I was challenged to open debate. Quotations from the Scriptures were flung in my face. My collegiate writings were quoted and cursed, upheld and torn to pieces. To what purpose? My generation has a war on its hands, perhaps more than one. What worries me is this: What part are we going to have in the writing of this peace—those of us who come back with a few ribbons over our breasts! Our national aim may be vague. The politicians can argue over policies, and the statesmen may dispute boundaries, but what are they planning for us and our children?

As far as my wife and I are concerned, we want some children. Whether during or after the war is secondary. I want to get back to my laboratory. My life and my future rests in a row of clean, peaceful test-tubes.

We won't get that, unless the young men who come after us are willing to make the same sacrifices that we

have. With all the hate and fear that ran wild in the last generation, it's a wonder that enough men were able to snap out of it in time to stop the Japs and Germans where they did. More than that, it was practically a miracle that there were enough trained Reserve officers to "hold the fort" until the O.C.S. swung into action.

What's wrong with compulsory military training? Perhaps we will take some young men away from their freedom, their pool-halls and their mothers' apron-strings for a year. Perhaps they will have to sweat for a while before they can establish their careers and homes and families. Isn't that better than waiting around in the egotistical fancy that we are immune to attack, and then requiring that these men break up established homes for year after bloody year?

Sure I'm selfish! I want a home and a family and the chance to work for them. More than that, I want some assurance that I'll have time to work at it. Right now this is my job, me and a lot of others. But when it's all over, I'll help my son or sons to

stand up and face the music. More than that, I would like to see all the sons of all the men in this country trained in the same way, so that my boys and a few others won't have to do it all alone.

When that has been done, then I think that one little old chemist and his wife can settle back in their arm-chairs and enjoy a few years of satisfaction in the feeling that they have done and suffered their little share in making life more livable.

R. W. T.
Lowell, Mass.

AFTER THE PEACE—WHAT?

OHIO'S" note in the April issue contains the seeds of that which disturbs me, and many others, above all else. That the United Nations will win this war is becoming reasonably evident. That we can lose the peace is increasingly manifested in the attitude of millions of Americans who, devoid of a broad humanitarian vision, seem to think of this "global strife" as a United States affair. I am an incurable democrat in the widest meaning of the most abused word in the language, and nothing is more abhorrent to me than the absurd idea that "democracy is Americanism." Certainly, "Americanism" in its primary sense is democratic; but democracy is neither the creation of this nation, nor its monopoly. If anything in human thinking is super-national, that thing is the democratic ideal. One cannot be isolationist and democratic at the same time. In loyalty to man as man, the individual must concern himself with universal human interests. The truly democratic mind is concerned with man's freedoms over the whole face of the earth.

Thus it seems evident to me that, regardless of our inheritance from the more limited men of another era, we must fit ourselves for the life of a new and different age. While we, as democrats, must uphold the predominant ideals of the Washingtons and the Jeffersons, it is essential to progress that we be prepared to modify old methods and to adopt new ones as contingencies arise. And this is of

What Do You Think?

These are anxious days for all of us. We are united solidly in the war effort; yet otherwise we are a vastly diverse nation; and no two of us have just the same personal problems.

Most of us are interested to know how the other fellow looks upon or solves his wartime dilemmas. And with this idea in mind, we would welcome letters from you, our readers, telling up what you are thinking about—about your business now or your career after the war; the war's effect on you or those dear to you; or if you are in one of the armed Services, a letter which would interest your fellow-readers on your recent experiences or expectations for the future—these within the censorship regulations, of course.

We will pay twenty-five dollars for each letter bought by us. The author's full name and address must accompany the letter; but, if he prefers, initials only may be used for publication. No letters will be returned. All letters submitted will become the property of McCall Corporation. Address: "What Do You Think?" Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y.

paramount significance in the new, close relationships with other peoples which already begin to develop. We cannot go on living in yesterday. We have got to experiment with new economic and social methods if we are to achieve any effectual leadership in the world's life. Nor can we, as a nation, afford to be misled by those antiquarian political philosophers who would pose as American messiahs to the world at large!

The oppressed little nations are not looking for "Americanism" as the hope of mankind in substitution for the totalitarian horror, whether Germanic or Russian. They are engulfed in the desperate struggle for "freedom to be what *they* want to be." And, as H. V. Kaltenborn has pointed out, our post-war diplomats will have to use exceeding care lest the demagogues of isolationism strive to impose an American ideology upon rescued peoples who fight and die for their own way of life—whatever that may happen to be. For instance, there will be kingdoms as well as republics in Europe and Asia when this war is done! Democracy guarantees the right of any people to have any kind of government it may choose. We can "spill the beans" if we are not extremely careful as to this.

Already Canadians, Australians, South Africans, New Zealanders, have been needlessly offended by officious assertions of pseudo-statesmen and arrogant columnists to the effect that "the British Commonwealth of Nations will dissolve when the war is done." As a Canadian friend wrote to me after Mr. Willkie had said something to that effect: "Why does he think we have struggled for generations to achieve this degree of unity with liberty among ourselves? We are a family of free nations banded together for a common democratic purpose, and we do not propose to have our future dictated by any outsider. Moreover, we feel that we have achieved a higher degree of genuine democracy than the United States. Our unwritten constitution describes what we are. The United States Constitution reveals what it hopes to be. Remember the Negro problem."

If my friend's language is strong, his idea is sound. We must help all these peoples as they, in tremendous floods of materials and lives, are helping us. But it is imperative that we scrupulously abstain from any apparent attempt to dictate the future to any of them—even to a defeated Germany after international policing has accomplished its steadying purpose. If we do not, we shall find ourselves isolated and distrusted as was the case when, having run away from the problem as we did after the

last war, we lost the confidence of the very people President Wilson hoped to save.

The great fear which possesses me, then, is that the failure of too many of our leaders and our people to realize that this is not a war between economic powers, but a struggle between two mighty and contrary ideals—freedom and its antithesis—may plunge us back into the exaggerated *nationalism* which is the paramount cause of "wars and rumors of wars." Already petty politicians and greedy blocks of self-interested folk are talking of high and still higher "protective tariffs," and thereby sowing the evil seeds which can only issue in yet another and more devastating war. If people do not have free access to all the produce of the earth, they will fight for it—and rightly.

*Eric Montizambert,
Laramie, Wyoming.*

HOW PRECIOUS LIFE IS

I HAVE spent nine months in the Army. I was a draftee like thousands of others, and while the routine and associations one comes up against in military service may have changed some fellows for the worse, I find that in my case and many others I know of, the result has been just the opposite.

During my thirty-one years on this earth, I have followed a rather aimless path. This was due, almost entirely, to an overdeveloped curiosity and a very lively sense of interest in any and everything I came across. My home life, rearing and education have been the very best, but the two failings—or assets—of mine I just mentioned, have kept me struggling along, trying everything new and interesting. The only trouble was that I was never able to decide what I liked best or what I wanted to do as my life's work.

During my time in the Army my sense of values has changed, and also my general outlook on life. It is as if I were far out in space, looking back at the pattern of my life. It is a rather meandering path, full of ups and downs, detours, hopes, disappointments and all the myriad other things one finds in the life of a person who cannot settle down. There are the straight lines where I thought I knew what I wanted and followed that course, and then those interrupting detours where my curiosity and interest were enlivened by study or practice in some new subject, which held my interest for some time.

Army life has held me down to a great extent, and made it difficult, if not impossible, for me to try everything as I did in civilian life. This has given me an entirely different viewpoint.

I used to be entirely self-reliant and thought I could go my merry way alone, without any help from others, but I realize now I was wrong. We all need each other and must work together to get any results at all, in either the Army or civilian life. That fact has been brought to the fore, because the Army teaches coöperation, and also because I have spent all my waking hours in the constant company of other soldiers and now realize the value of companionship. All of this applies to many others who were like me, back in the days when we were civilians.

Many of us in the armed forces now for the first time realize how precious life is, and how we often wasted much of it because it was something we took for granted. Little everyday things which we did in civilian life, and which were done for us, by friends and family, but were often taken for granted have taken on great importance now, and are often priceless. We realize how much we owe those friends and our parents, and are looking forward to the time when the war is over and we can begin to repay them in some way. It is true that by serving in the armed forces we are helping to make the world a safe place for them to live in, but we are also doing that for ourselves, and our real debt is much greater than that. Besides, they are still doing plenty for us.

Many of us have definite plans for the period after the war, and I'm no exception. Out of the entire varied pattern of my life I now know what path I want to follow after the war. The path is clear and heads in one direction; the plans are made, and God grant that the time will soon come when I, and others like me, can follow our chosen paths to a happier, fuller and more unselfish life.

The post-war period holds great promise for all of us who will just stand off and look back at our pre-war life, and make the necessary plans to change it when we are once more released into civilian life.

*Pvt. Burton L. Wollenzien,
Utah.*

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND

UNTIL just recently I hadn't realized how much my trend of thought has changed during the last four years. With the events of the world upheaval unrolling before me I realize now that my views, ideas and ideals had been going through a subtle transformation. Instead of thinking solely of myself as an individual and the U.S.A. as my entire world, I now think of myself as a citizen of the whole globe and the U.S.A. as a state of the entire earth.

My thought is aptly phrased in the quotation by John Donne which Hemingway uses in naming and introducing "For Whom the Bell Tolls."

No man is an *Iland*, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*; if a *Clod* bee washed away by the *Sea*, *Europe* is the lesse, as well as if a *Promontorie* were, as well as if a *Mannor* of thy friends or thine owne were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in *Man-kinde*; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.

Substitute *world* for *continent* and *Europe* in this quotation, and we have a working plan for every civilized person on this earth. We can never again sit back complacently without interfering while savage gangsters ravage, rape and murder. No longer can we witness insane persecution and cold-blooded killing without raising our hands in defense of the victims regardless of their race, color or creed. If we do, civilization, which is now tottering on the brink of an abyss, will end for many centuries to come.

My faith in the future for this country is based on the boys who are now doing the fighting. I believe these boys will return to us as clear-thinking men. They will have gone through living hells; they will have visited many lands and have seen the different ways of many peoples. With such experiences behind them they will avoid accepting surface values; instead they will probe to the depths and come up with truths which will expose fraud and self-interest. When certain newspapers campaign against a class, using vicious rumors and lies as ammunition, these ex-fighting men will rip away the enveloping sheets until the greedy are ruthlessly unmasked.

The ex-service men's organization will steer clear of any political entanglements; instead they will put the fear of God into crooked politicians. They will fight to the last any legislation backed by self-seeking pressure groups or blocs. They will not hide their heads while grasping hands are pilfering the pork barrel nor will their own hands help in legalized robbery as was so often the case with my generation which went through World War I.

I feel that the men who are fighting for Victory today will come back with flexible minds; minds which will be able to throw out old things if those things are useless in the new world. My generation has refused to let go of anything which is old. We have revered old things because of their age not their present utility. We

have been afraid to adopt new ideas if they conflicted with the old. Our fighting men will have the courage to install new ideas even if they have to fight the superstition of old traditions. They will establish a social and economic security for the country.

These are my hopes and thoughts for the future. I only pray that I live long enough to see this country and the world started on the path to true civilization which my children may enjoy.

H. C. Ludeman.

P.S. I am 44 years of age, served in the U. S. Navy during World War I and at the present am working in an aircraft factory.

LET'S BELIEVE IN U. S.

DEMOCRACY will triumph on the battlefield. That is a foregone conclusion. But what brand of democracy?

Will it be for us in the United States our own stanch brand, with its sturdy individualism, its virile and intelligent initiative, its sense of personal responsibility, its opportunities for all? Or will our robust stout-heartedness be weakened with "isms" and theories that may fit other democracies, but can only choke ours to impotency?

This is not a criticism of any other form of democracy. Others have developed along their own line of character, history and circumstances, as we have. We are different, that's all.

Let's believe in our strength and our wealth and our intelligence.

We are strong. We are wealthy. We are intelligent. We should be humbly proud of these facts.

We are 95.7% literate. Eight hundred radio stations flash information, comment, debate thought-provoking questions to twenty-eight million radio sets. Sixteen hundred daily papers report the world's most accurate news. We have always done our own thinking.

Never, in all history, has a people had so many comforts and luxuries, so much money with which to buy these things. Part of our wealth comes from our great natural resources, but nine-tenths of it may be credited to American foresight and initiative, willingness to tackle the impossible and work through it. It is only heretical Americans and jealous outsiders who scoff at this wealth and call us dollar chasers. Is there a nation on earth today who does not want some of our dollars? Our enemies would get our wealth if they could.

Our strength is due to a combination of this wealth and energy and intelligence. The world knows what we can do and marvels. Why should we underrate ourselves?

Let's believe in our industrial might:

By industry I mean both management and labor. Despite bickering, these two are doing splendid team work. They have literally accomplished miracles.

A single illustration will serve:

Last June matters seemed to be going pretty well in North Africa. Here in America we were leisurely building a new and bigger gun, a 105-mm. There seemed to be no hurry. But when, suddenly, disaster struck in Africa, it became apparent that the British 75's were no match for the German 88's. Code messages went to defense plants all over the United States. Great numbers of the new 105's must be ready for shipment in nine days.

Management and labor accepted the challenge, *on faith*. They did not know what the guns were wanted for, and they asked no questions. *They did the job*. In nine days the guns were loaded and on their way from Eastern ports, under heavy convoy.

Let's believe in our common sense.

In the long run you can not beat the aggregate wisdom of the American people. We need not worry too much over the confusion, cross-purposes, inconsistency, muddling, political finagling, the superimposing of unsound theories on our democracy, and other disturbances of the present. Our collective wisdom, collective common sense, collective love of personal liberty will take care of all such things, in due time.

Let's believe in our mission.

First, to preserve our own brand of democracy for our own use, with no attempt to force it on any other nation. Second, to help the devastated democracies to reestablish their own governments, but only until they can get on their feet again. Third, to throw our whole weight against future aggression. We must use our strength and our influence to discipline, police and educate the totalitarian peoples until they are fitted to again take their place in the commonwealth of nations. That is a big task. We must do it or face another war.

So, let's have faith in America.

Faith in ourselves has made us what we are. By faith Washington drew his sword for liberty, and Jefferson saw a great democracy, invisible to doubters. By faith the farmers stood at Lexington and endured Valley Forge. By faith Lincoln saw a united nation again. By faith our pioneers went westward, built homes and schools and churches and factories.

By faith we can recover our losses and our balance and surge forward to new accomplishments.

L. S. Munsell,
Kansas.



Work-Boat

A Navy man gives us a stirring and authentic story of the sea and air war off the Aleutians.

AS soon as the *Wandank* came within hose-range of the blazing piers, Lieutenant Weldron ordered the tug's fire-monitor opened. The stream hissed into the base of the flames, mingling a hot cloud of steam with the chill morning mist of Dutch Harbor. Barely visible through the low overcast, a flight of Army bombers from Fort Mears roared off to the westward to search for the Japanese carrier.

Alongside the pier, the blackened skeleton of the big dredge that the *Wandank* had towed into the harbor the previous evening crashed into the harbor. Lieutenant Weldron supposed that when he got back to Seattle after five miserable weeks of deep-sea towing, there'd be another damned dredge all trussed up and waiting for him. He considered it a bright, bitter example of the wastefulness of war, which he hated with more reason than most military men.

For one thing, Weldron had been rather badly wounded at Pearl Harbor before he'd even had time to get his pants on; and for another, the resulting five months' hospitalization had given him a chance to start that book he'd always been going to write. Somehow, since his stomach had been scrambled with a bomb fragment, fighting didn't appeal to him much

any more, while writing about it had turned out to be fascinating. Of course he had refused retirement for his wound, because he figured he was still fit for noncombatant duty in the States. But that, to Weldron, didn't mean tug-boat trips to the Aleutian Islands.

Since the fueling connection from which the *Wandank* was to have fueled for her return voyage had been on the demolished pier, it was necessary to rig a new oil-hose from the shore across some barges to water deep enough for the tug to reach it. But by three o'clock the tug was almost ready to go. By that time the low overcast had settled down, wrapping the harbor in its usual zero-zero visibility.

There were a couple of young Army Air Force officers in the C.O.'s office when Weldron reported there in response to a summary request. The Navy captain commanding the station was big, brusque, and to the point. From his swivel chair he introduced Weldron to a lieutenant-colonel from Fort Mears and a major of a bombardment squadron, stationed there. "The Colonel will explain why I sent for you," he said cheerfully.

The Lieutenant-Colonel smiled a bit apologetically. "I've already told the Captain how sorry we are to have to

bother the Navy," he began, "but it seems we've lost a general. Brigadier-General McClain has just taken command of the bombardment group out here, you know. He was particularly anxious to show the Japs they couldn't get away with a sneak raid, so he led the Major's squadron himself when it went after their flat-top."

Weldron nodded. "How did you make out, Major?"

The Major was a boy of about twenty-four. "It was hard to tell," he said easily. "We found the flat-top all right, about a hundred miles north of Yunaska Island; but we had to come in at her under a low overcast and they threw out a lot of flak. It was pretty sticky."

"The point is," the Colonel interrupted, "the General's plane is one of the two that didn't come back. He was last seen with his two left motors shot out, trying to make Yunaska."

Weldron recalled Yunaska, and frowned. The island was about two hundred miles west, and consisted of the usual volcanoes and soggy tundra surrounded by a shore-line of unbroken volcanic cliffs. He had been out there some five years ago on a survey expedition, and ever since had hoped fervently that he would never have to go back.

"It's a miracle how the General did it," the Major went on, "but he set his ship down through pure pea-soup on that flat point that sticks out to the south of the island. When we got there, all you could see were the tops of a couple of volcanoes sticking through the fog, but we could hear him transmitting from the ground. He said he'd broken a leg and some ribs, and two of his crew were killed. His other men are in a bad way too."

"Unfortunately," the Colonel interjected, "there's no chance of getting a plane on or off Yunaska undamaged. In fact, it's a miracle they weren't all washed out."

"Yes," Weldron admitted dourly, "it is. I've been out there."

"Then you'll have no trouble finding the place," said the Captain. "When will you be ready to get under way?"

Warrior

by DURAND
KIEFER

Weldron stared coldly into the big ruddy face beaming at him and said evenly: "My orders were to return to Seattle as soon as I refueled."

"Oh, I've fixed that!" smiled the Captain. "I've already requested your services for a few days by dispatch, and got an affirmative." He swiveled in his chair. "You can put your rescue-party aboard the *Wandank* any time, Colonel. Have you everything that you need, Weldron? Provisions? Ammunition?"

Weldron stood thinking, not of what he needed, but of a small frame house opposite a park, of a pretty woman named Martha, of two rather well-bred kids, and of the warmth of the sun streaming through a window onto a portable typewriter. His glance, fleeing from the Captain's florid face to the cool grayness of the window, picked out the outlines of a demolished building beyond, and he thought then of the blazing pier and of Japanese bombers, and finally, of the little *Wandank*, the only "man-of-war" in the harbor.

Weldron nodded. "I'll take a hundred rounds of three-inch to replace what I used this morning."

THE Army rescue party, consisting of a half-dozen technicians and a doctor, with a boy captain in charge (leading Weldron to wonder if there were any lieutenants in the Army any more) came aboard the *Wandank* shortly after five. They must have been disappointed by what they saw, but they were polite enough not to show it. The *Wandank* was a dumpy little work-boat. Her dingy war-color was laid on in twenty-four coats, one for each year since her commissioning. Her asthmatic engines could still drive her stubby nose through the water at ten knots, but her fat old Scotch boilers panted mightily to do it. Her only concession to modern warfare was a pair of three-inch double-purpose guns, squatting on her low foredeck where their fire astern was effectively blanketed by the noble rotund wheel-house and the tow-boat stack atop the midship cabin.



"Have you provisions? Ammunition?" the Captain asked.

After a nerve-racking hour of groping his way out of the harbor with lead-line and whistle echoes, Weldron's misery was complete upon finding the weather at sea even thicker, if anything, than in the anchorage.

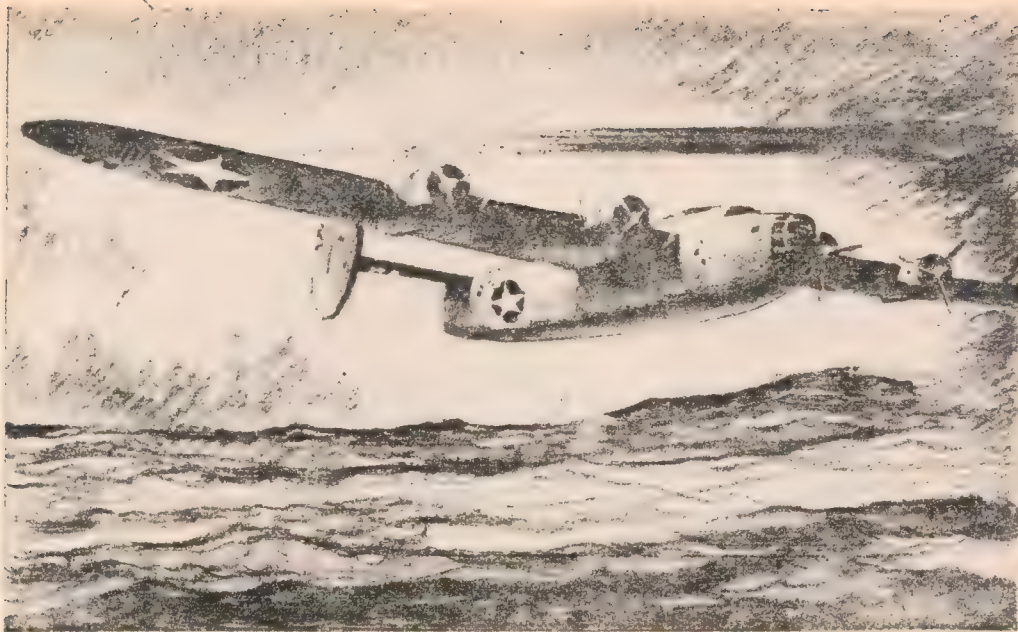
In a fine fit of gloom, he laid a course to pass Cape Cheerful a good five miles abeam, and ordered his dinner of dry toast and coddled eggs brought up to the bridge. His tin pitcher of milk (eight ounces every hour) hung as always in a sling from a hook in the pilot-house overhead, where it gyrated wildly with the lively bucking of the little vessel in the vicious chop of the Bering Sea. Since the third day out of Seattle, the milk had been made from a peculiarly rank powder that Weldron abhorred. He reached for the pitcher. The Army captain hastily excused himself and made for the lee bridge-rail, which had been thoughtfully pointed out to him in advance. . . .

Because of the continuous head seas, it was after sunset on the following day when the *Wandank* picked up the dark loom of Yunaska's rocky southern shore. Fortunately, the wind and sea were from the northwest, affording enough lee behind the island's southern point to get the tug's motor-

whaleboat into the water with the awkward cargo boom. Weldron, not entirely unselfishly, wished the rescue party a speedy and successful return, and anchored for the night in the lee of the point.

But he didn't rest very well, and with the first gray light of dawn was on the bridge. He gave the order to weigh anchor and rang up slow ahead, with full left rudder, to clear the anchorage, wondering whether getting under way was the thing to do. Offshore he would have more room to maneuver, but a much unsteadier gun-platform, while inshore he would be less conspicuous—and wouldn't have so far to swim.

IN a fine demonstration of the fickleness of Aleutian island weather, the wind dropped to a pleasant light breeze with the rising of the sun—which, within an hour, had quietly melted away the early twilight mists as if it were the usual order of the day in these parts. Incredibly, by breakfast-time it was a beautiful cloudless morning, almost warm and balmy. Weldron eased the tub to within a mile of the rock and rubble beach to search it hopefully for the landing party. But other than the



"The General's plane was last seen with his two left motors shot out."

two boat-keepers in the whaleboat anchored off the beach, there was no sign of them.

The tug had hardly started to turn back to seaward when the lookout aloft called: "Aircraft sighted to starboard!"

Weldron trained his binoculars where the lookout was pointing, and picked up a group of shapeless specks, black against the depthless blue of the sky to the northwestward. "Full speed ahead," he said, and stepped into the pilot-house.

"Sound general quarters."

The general alarm gong started banging in the crew's quarters, and the men came shouldering out of the mess-room with their mouths and hands full of toast and bacon and fried eggs.

"They'll have to fight on empty stomachs," thought Weldron, remembering Pearl Harbor, and the thought irritated him consciously. He hated to see his men inconvenienced. It often made it hard for him to issue necessary orders. He'd deplored his own lot often enough in the past to feel that theirs was infinitely worse.

"The planes are now astern, moving south," the lookout called, and Weldron noticed that they did not seem to be getting any closer. He flirted with the pretty thought that they might miss the *Wandank* entirely. The ship's radio was already busy warning Dutch Harbor.

Weldron pointed out an area on the chart. "We'll steam around at standard speed about a mile off-shore where we can maneuver but may not

be seen against the shore-line," he said.

Mr. Fry, the chief bos'n, suggested that the mountains crowded the shore pretty close and gave the ship less time to fire at planes hedge-hopping their tops if she were close inshore.

"I know," said Weldron, "but—" He stopped and frowned, remembering that he was not required to offer explanations to subordinates. Nevertheless he wondered how much his decision to stay in close was influenced by that business of swimming ashore. He was a strong swimmer.

"The planes have changed course for the island!" announced the lookout. There was little chance of the *Wandank* escaping detection now. Weldron stepped out of the pilot-house. "Keep her afloat!" he called back to Fry, and laughed awkwardly. "I'm going to see what I can do with the fire-control."

WELDROn had been an anti-aircraft officer on one of the old *Omaha*-class cruisers in the days before Pearl Harbor. He'd rigged up a couple of rough angle-finders and an old three-meter range-finder on top of the *Wandank's* pilot-house. He went up there now and got his sight-angle tables, pasted on shirt cardboards, out of the machine-gun ammunition locker, and gave them to the sight-setting talker, who had a portable telephone to the guns slung around his neck.

The planes had been losing altitude as they approached the island from the west, and were soon out of sight behind the farther of the island's two

towering volcanoes. They were hidden thus for such a long time that Weldron was ready to conclude that they had simply reconnoitered and gone off to the west again. Then three large dark shapes appeared magically, low over the shoulder of the nearest volcano, not more than three miles from the ship.

The planes had simply swung around to the north of the farther mountain and approached through the deep valley between the two until they were practically on top of their target. It was a simple little trick of the sort the Japs were getting famous for, but it was new to Weldron.

There wasn't time now to use the range-finder. There wasn't time to even snap a commence-firing angle. The sailors on the instruments were still fumbling with them when Weldron, taking his estimate from the height of the mountain, bawled: "Altitude two thousand, position angle thirty-three, deflection seven two!" He realized he was yelling too loud and too fast, and repeated the order in a more normal voice. The talker took his sight-angles out of the tables in his hand and sent them down to the guns, talking too loud and too fast himself.

The planes were Aichi Ai 104's, and looked as if they meant business. "Here we go again," Weldron thought, and with a mouth almost too dry to speak, he croaked: "Stand by!" He heard the two gun-captains down forward shout "Ready One!" and the position-angle pointer sing out the open-fire angle.

"Commence firing!" shouted Weldron, again forgetting to be calm. He hadn't had time to warn Fry to maneuver the ship, but he noticed gratefully that she was making standard speed, and her bow had swung around to face the planes so that his guns would bear.

THE pair of three-inch barked together when Weldron pressed the master firing-key, keeping his eyes on his stop-watch now. The guns slammed out as one again in three seconds, and every three seconds, rhythmically, like integrated pistons of a well-built machine.

Weldron wished desperately that he could watch his bursts, but he knew it would do no good. His barrage was laid out with pre-set fuses to smother the bomb-release point. Since this point depended upon factors which, with a few instruments, were almost as well known to the target as to the plane, Weldron figured that if the plane was going to hit him, it would have to run the barrage to do it. And with two three-inch shells bursting a half-second apart in front of the bomb-release point every three seconds, the theory was as good for a number of planes as for one—for as long as the barrage could be maintained.

The trouble was, it was only a theory. Weldron remembered with some bitterness that his method had not won him any laurels in the cruisers; there had been too many target-sleeves that weren't towed through the bomb-release point, and holes in the sleeve was all that counted in those days. No holes, no score for the practice.

Weldron kept his eyes glued to his watch and squeezed out the salvos with his trigger-finger. At a three-second interval, and a high angle of fire, the guns were firing as soon as the breech-block slammed shut. Weldron, through constant practice, had taught his loaders to pivot with the punch. Their shoulder muscles had toughened, and now it was a thrilling sight to watch them pivot with the recoil and follow it back with the next shell like an integral part of the gun, adjusted to the finest tolerances as the smoking cartridge cases flew clear by inches, and the next shell seated with the same click as the gun's return to battery.

The loaders made his semi-automatic guns practically automatic weapons. Now they made a most satisfying almost continuous roar, and covered the foredeck with clouds of wadding and smoking cartridge cases.

Weldron was grateful that the Japs attacked in a group. The bomb-release point was, of course, different for each different bearing, altitude and

speed, and so it was highly considerate of the little yellow men to follow their leader in a thundering parade through the same point. Weldron found it difficult to keep his eyes on his stop-watch, remembering how the docks of Dutch Harbor burned. With a quiet corner of his mind he calculated that he'd have time to get off about twenty salvos before he was hit.

After the first couple, he settled down and punched them out with the key exactly on the second. He lost track of the number, though, and was surprised when he pressed the key and the guns didn't fire because they were elevated too high to load on time. He called, "Check fire!" and looked up then and saw the planes about two thousand feet overhead. Their noise, added to the frantic chatter of the ship's two machine-guns just aft of him, was breathtaking.

Weldron could see a pair of bombs falling, and was fascinated. He heard Mr. Fry ring up full speed, and felt the tug shudder at the effort. The added couple of knots saved her. Several large bombs were wide, but one fell not sixty feet astern in the wake, and shook the ship up fiercely, deluging her fantail with water.

Weldron turned with a start to listen to a sailor who was pulling on his sleeve and jabbering at him. It seemed the youngster was intoxicated by the idea that they'd hit one of the planes. Weldron had had some pride in his barrage in the cruiser days, and sincerely hoped it had actually hit something, but he was not given to wishful thinking.

"It looks like we spoiled their aim, anyway," he said with some satisfaction. It was good not to have to worry about a score.

One of the planes suddenly lost a large chunk of wing and crashed with a fine show of spray four or five miles to the north, while another was plainly limping and blimping after the third as the two turned away to the westward, leaving the little *Wandank* steaming triumphantly in circles, her big tow-boat rudder jammed hard to port by the near miss under her stern. The big screw pounded and groaned suspiciously, too, as if it was out of alignment. A check on the soundings showed she was taking water aft.

An hour later Weldron was still on the fantail, working with Mr. Fry on some way of unspringing the rudder, when the lookout hailed another flight of planes from the west. There was soon no doubt of their hostile character, and Weldron was scrambling for the fire-control platform again, wondering what the Japs thought the *Wandank* was that kept them coming after her.

This flight was a section of carrier-type Zeros. They were coming in low

for a strafing attack, so Weldron ordered his fire-control and three-inch gun-crews below under cover, and left the pair of fifty-caliber machine-guns on top of his cabin manned to fight them off. He also ordered everyone out of the pilot-house to the greater security of the compartments below decks, since the ship could only steam in a circle, anyway, and it was as good an evasion tactic as any.

The three Zeros screamed over at less than five hundred feet, blazing away with their fixed guns and cannon, and flinging a pair of small bombs each as they passed. Either the *Wandank's* circling or her machine-gunners must have bothered them rather badly, though, for there were few twenty-mm. hits and the bombs were mostly wide. All except two. One slammed into the fantail and tore the deck up for about fifteen feet, laying the whole stern open to the waterline and tipping the towing bitts aft at a crazy angle. The other hit the elevated muzzle of one of the three-inch guns forward, exploded in the air and riddled the empty pilot-house with fragments.

The fighters banked up and zoomed for a second attack, but they only had their guns this time, and although they punched a couple of hundred holes in the deck-houses and a few in the main-deck, no one below was hit. The ship's machine-gunners caught hell, though. Only two of the six men on the guns were still on their feet when Weldron got up there. Two were dead, and there was a lot of blood. They were the first thoroughly machine-gunned corpses Weldron had seen and it made him a little sick. It was purely a physical reaction. He had always thought he would get boiling mad if he saw any of his own crew killed. But there was only a little sadness, a little awe at the mess, and a sort of sudden weariness.

The pharmacist's mate got the two wounded below and dressed their wounds, leaving the bullets in till the Army doctor came back. They were tracer wounds and very painful, but morphine helped a lot. The two bodies were cleaned up and prepared for burial at sea. It made the men pretty quiet.

A HIT on the fantail had neatly solved the problem of the jammed rudder. The whole stern was flooding fast, and Weldron sent the bos'n down to shore up the engineer's storeroom bulkhead if it was still tight. Mr. Fry came back and said it was tight, all right, and would hold up when the men got it shored.

That left the problem of steering. Weldron had the bos'n put the ship's dinghy in the water and then unship

the big wooden cargo boom and lower it to the maindeck, where they sawed a long slot into one end of it. The idea was to run the slotted end out through the towing chock in the stern and fit a hatch-cover in the slot from the dinghy. Since the stern was now almost awash, it would be a relatively simple matter to rig relieving tackle to the inner end of the boom and use it like a big steering oar. Weldron was rather proud of the idea.

They were still working on it, with the dinghy astern, when the third flight of planes was sighted over the island. It was another three-plane section of Zeros, keeping high this time, about three thousand feet.

Everyone on deck scrambled for cover except the relief machine-gun crew on top of the captain's cabin, and the two men in the boat tailing astern. Weldron wanted to get them aboard but there wasn't time, and he was afraid the screw wash would capsize the dinghy, so he cut it loose and told the men to row back to the ship when the planes had gone.

IT was over six hours since the first attack now. In a way, if the tug survived, Weldron was glad they kept bothering with him, because it meant their carrier was still around and the Army might be able to knock it off this time. There'd be a lot of satisfaction in that.

Weldron stood outside the engine-room door while the tug nosed around in a wide circle under the effect of her single screw and no rudder. He was watching the planes wheeling in a close circle over him, out of range of his machine-guns. He didn't want to expose the fire-control and gun-crews to use his three-inch, figuring these fighters, without bomb-sights, would have to come down within range of his machine-guns to hit him with anything, anyway. And then their relative motion would be too great to follow them with his bigger stuff. So he stood and waited and watched, feeling like a chicken watching hawks hovering over the hen-yard.

They suddenly winged over out of their circle and came snarling straight down on the ship, blazing away with their guns. Regular dive-bombing stuff. But they weren't so good at it. They threw a stick of small stuff pretty wild at about six hundred feet, and zoomed up too quick in a steep climbing turn. That's when one of the *Wandank's* gunners caught one of them square in the cockpit with his tracers, like a bright rapier stuck clean through a bird. The plane fell out of its turn into a screaming power dive that ended in the biggest splash Weldron ever saw. It certainly made him feel good.

The other two were coming back. Weldron clattered up the ladder and ran along the boat-deck, shouting at his gunners up above: "Take cover! Take cover, you damned fools! Captain's orders!" He knew the planes would go for the machine-guns, and they couldn't hurt the tug much any more if they didn't get the men.

But the men didn't even look over the windbreak at him. They just cut loose with their guns as the planes came boring in, hammering away like crazy, and for a few seconds the tracers were crossing each other in the unholy blazing of machine-guns you ever heard. Then all of a sudden all the guns stopped, and the planes roared over mast-high and zoomed up again, and that was bad. Because then is when the ship's guns should be getting in their licks, and they weren't.

So Weldron knew he'd lost five or six more men, and this time he was mad; he was mad at those damn' fool dead-hero sailors of his for not using their damn' fool heads, and ducking a Sunday punch that you could see coming a mile away.

Weldron stumbled and fell because his leg buckled under him. It wasn't till then that he knew he'd been hit, just above the knee, and then he was madder at himself than he ever was at his men. He began swearing so earnestly that Mr. Fry, coming along the boat-deck, had to grin.

Weldron had to stand there on the boat-deck on one leg and watch the two planes go after the dinghy with the two men in it. It hurt him worse than his wound. The men didn't get up when the planes passed over, although the boat was full of holes. One of the planes lost half of its riddled elevator in pulling out of its dive, and twisted into a crazy spin into the sea, but somehow there was little satisfaction in it for Weldron. The whole business was too miserably dirty.

The other plane simply flew off to the west over the island.

Weldron wouldn't let them give him any morphine. He sat on the boat-deck aft and watched the men finish rigging the jury rudder. It was a good job, and it worked. . . .

It was late afternoon when Weldron had worked the *Wandank* in-shore near the point and sent the patched-up dinghy in to find out what was holding up the rescue party. The ship's radio man was giving Dutch Harbor all the bad news and asking why the Army Air Corps wasn't being more helpful, when the landing party showed up on the beach toting a couple of stretchers.

The motor-whaleboat was about halfway out to the ship with the stretchers when the Japs showed up

again over the shoulder of Yunaska's western volcano. In a very few minutes six fighters struck simultaneously at the ship and the whaleboat. Weldron manned his three-inch guns as well as the machine-guns this time, resetting all his fuses to two seconds to put a barrage a couple of hundred feet over the boat to discourage strafing.

The tactic proved sound as far as the boat was concerned, but the fighters turned against the ship's guns. The stick of light bombs they let go deluged the whole ship with water and blew one rather bad hole in the foredeck, putting one of the three-inch out of commission and killing off all its crew.

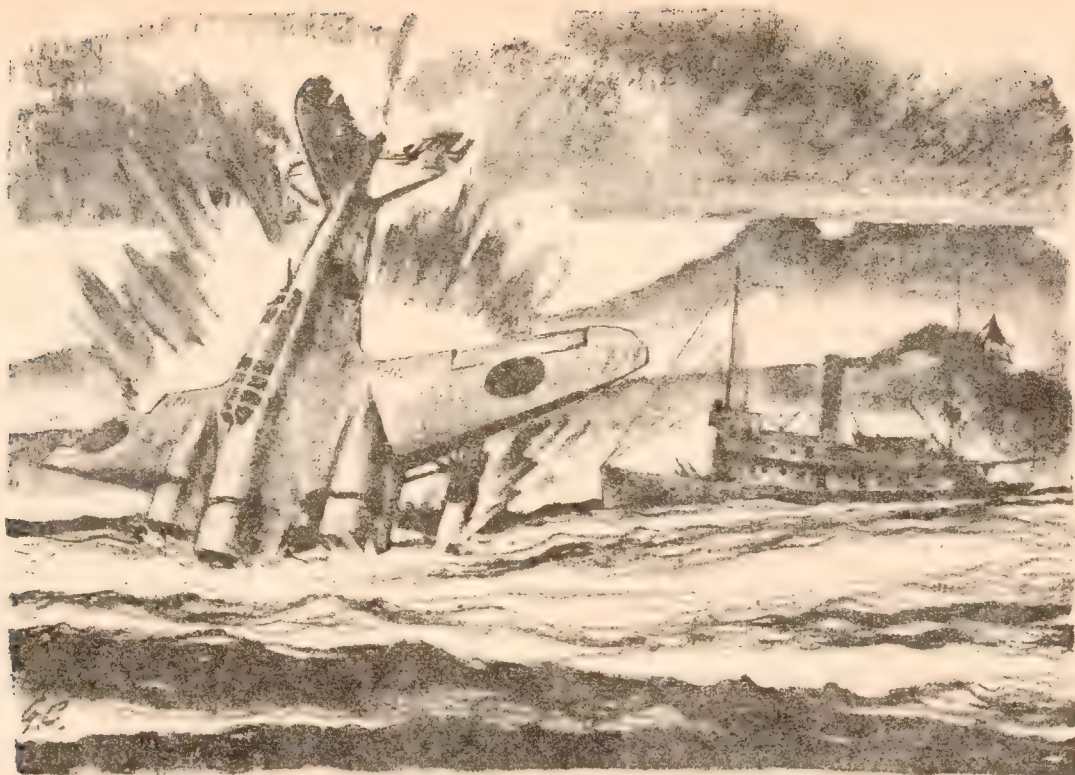
Weldron climbed wearily down from the control platform to regard the shambles with a heart heavy with remorse and doubt. General McClain, from a stretcher in the boat alongside, was profuse in his gratitude for being saved from the strafing attack, but Weldron's mind was busy weighing the lives of fourteen of his own men against that of an unknown general and a half-dozen of the Army. He very much wanted Mr. Fry, whose judgment he always trusted, to assure him that he had merely done his duty, but it was the sort of question you couldn't ask a subordinate without jeopardizing his confidence.

WELDROn greeted the General and his men with an absent-minded frown, and gave orders for making them as comfortable as possible in the cramped wardroom under the care of the Army doctor.

The whaleboat had to go back for the remainder of the rescue party still ashore, with some of the salvaged instruments. By the time it had returned with the dinghy in tow, and both boats had been unloaded, it was getting dark.

Weldron was loud and profane in expressing his relief when it was no longer light enough for planes to bother him. He also did not hesitate to let his two officers and the Army officers know that the chances of their ever reaching Dutch Harbor were very poor.

It would require a most unlikely continuance of good weather to keep the tug afloat with her holed fore-and-after-decks, but with her reduced speed she could not make the port during the night, so that good weather would expose her, with daylight, to further air attacks which she was in no condition to survive. Most of her meager armament and practically all of her trained gunners were gone. One more bomb, no matter how small, would finish her. One moderate sea breaking over her low foredeck would be equally fatal, as her pumps were



The plane fell in a screaming dive that ended in the biggest splash Weldron ever saw.

working at capacity now to keep her afloat.

He had little hope except in the ship's boats, now on a long tow-line astern because there was nothing to hoist them in with. And even this was not hope for himself. He supposed that he would have to conform to the traditions of the sea and be the last to leave the ship. Since the boats could carry no more than half of the surviving crew and passengers at a time, that left his chance of survival practically non-existent. He laid courses for Dutch Harbor that would keep the ship continually within a few miles of the formidable coasts of the islands, and ordered best speed out of the crippled screw—something less than seven knots, or about thirty hours to Dutch Harbor.

AFTER a dinner as lavish as Weldron could devise it with the stores available (while he ate his cod-dled eggs, dry toast and powdered milk), the unwounded members of the crew not on watch gathered at quarters along the starboard rail to bury the dead. Even with a half-dozen solemn-faced Army men present, there was only a handful lined up on the narrow deck to give their whole thought to the nineteen still figures as they slid, one by one, to

their last rest in the frigid waters of Yunaska Strait.

Weldron's voice, reading the burial service, was deep and serious; the ancient words filled the small company on the softly swaying deck under the pale stars with a sense of the solemn mystery of life and death:

"—If after the manner of men I have fought with the beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die . . . There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power—"

When the last flag-shrouded figure had slid into the sea, the party disbanded silently to their bunks on the darkened ship. The casualties had so seriously depleted the watch-list that the hours of those who were still able were long and tiring.

Shortly before midnight the stars became overcast and the sea was appreciably roughened by a cold wind from the northwest. With each hour the wind and Weldron's anxiety in-

creased. On the mid-watch the sky was completely overcast and the sea was running quite heavily from the northwest, which fortunately was now astern.

THREE weeks later the Navy Department in Washington released the story to the press services. Weldron, slouched at his typewriter in Martha's spare bedroom, read the evening papers with alarm.

"JAPS DOWNED IN DARING RESCUE," they screamed. "NAVY HERO RESCUES AIR GENERAL." "Rudder Gone! Guns smashed! Saves Ship!" "Tiny Tug in Sea Epic." "RESCUE HERO TO GET BRAVERY MEDAL." "Tug Captain to Join Heroes in Recruiting Drive."

There was a lot more in the same vein, but Weldron had had enough. A man fights for his country as best he can when called on to do so, but to be ogled and medaled because he had survived! Weldron thought of the *Wandank's* torn and bloody decks, of the silent bodies slipped overside. It was not fair to ask him to make speeches about that. It— He pushed his manuscript into the wastebasket and dropped his head on his typewriter.

The telephone was already ringing.



A Very Tough

THIS Jay Larrabee is a very tough character, as who should know better than me? Fifteen years I have known Jay Larrabee, from thirty to forty-five, both age and waistline. He fought Tim Carney and I was in his corner; and after he gave Tim the elbows and the laces and stepped on Tim's toes and butted him over the left peeper, and still Tim got the nod, Jay Larrabee hung up his gloves. But he never stopped being tough.

So here we are, over in Brooklyn, in this club with two hundred ringside

seats—undertaker's chairs, at that, and some benches. We have got Macy Crewe in the ring with Jim Regan for the championship of the bums who fight in clubs like this club in Brooklyn. And Jay Larrabee has got four top flight sports writers with their chins in the resin to watch Macy Crewe.

I am handling Macy, but I will not give you five cents for his future. I will give Macy anything I got, and I will give his wife and three kids anything I can steal. But for Macy's ring career I would not give my tin ear,

which is useful only to scratch when I am worried, like tonight.

These reporters, these experts, they are down at ringside, and they are wondering why they are there, and I am wondering too; and Jay Larrabee, bald as an onion and twice as offensive, is strutting around like we are in the Garden already, talking big.

"In five years my Macy has not dropped a duke! Five years! I have brought him up slowly, and now he is ready, and I want you to know it. I want him up there! If you troglodytes had the wits of a maundering



He was a hooper and not a boxer,
but he fought and danced his way
to victory before he took on his
share of war.

by Joel Reeve

Polly sang them some numbers. Green Valley people are the world's most champion regulars, and they like us, and listen to stories about Dempsey and Tunney and Big Joe, and are good to us.

Except one character, a semi-pro football star, a local hero with his nose out of joint on account of Jay's lies. This farmer is big and tough, and one night he starts cracking at Jay, not quite passing the lie, just making cracks. Jay likes to eat, and this is Horace Hork's store, so we lay off. Then this big character, he starts on Polly.

Jay got up from behind the warm stove. His face is unhappy and his third chin is sagging. He starts around the stove, me behind him. Polly cried, poor little kid. The football fellow sneered at her.

Macy Crewe came jiggling from nowhere. His feet were like little dancing mice. He seemed to be able to put those big hands wherever he wanted. He put them in the puss of this football character so many times that hamburger would have looked good on him.

Horace Horks cheered, and all the good local people toted away the footballer, and then Horace got the idea of a charity fight. They brought down a palooka from Madison; and Macy, still mad and a little bewildered, jumped around and won by from here to there.

SO Jay Larrabee had him a fighter. Macy kept saying: "I'm a dancer. There's a future for us on the stage. I don't like to fight, Jay!"

But Jay would scream: "There's a million in the fight business! You have control of your muscles! Beautiful! You have coördination! You jackanapes, you've got to think of Polly and the baby you're goin' to have!"

Poor Polly was still too ill to argue, and Jay was too tough for Macy. So we had a fighter. Well, we had a boy who would go through the motions, and who could not be beaten by palookas, because he had the finest legs ever seen in the ring. Macy could go backward as well as forward. He learned boxing as easily as a new tap step. He was everything a fighter should be—except he couldn't fight to keep himself warm.

Character

mollusk, we would have been up there before. Discrimination!"

He insults people. He spits on them, and expects to have them run a fever over Macy Crewe.

Of course Macy has not lost a fight in five years. He also has not won on a kayo, ever in his life. Macy has got no business in the ring at all. If he is not hypnotized by Jay Larrabee, he would never climb in there. Because Macy is not a fighter at all. He is a hooper.

That is how we got Macy, out in Green Valley, Wisconsin. We had

just lost a bum named Holligan, via the run-out route, with our purse and my new overcoat. The same day, while we were sending collect wires to even our enemies, and a blizzard is blowing up, this troupe of sad vaudevillians lost a battle to revive the three-a-day in the sticks, and there were Polly and Macy Crewe, lost kids shivering in the Wisconsin wind.

There was a grocery store, run by a sport named Horace Horks. He fed us, this Horace, and we sat around a pot stove, and Jay Larrabee told lies, and Macy jiggled for the locals, and



Macy trained by working out new dance routines.

Now the customers always get on to this. The smoothest performers in the gym scarcely ever become crowd-pleasers, and that included Macy. With palms! We must have fought in five hundred clubs in five years—and we made a living. But still nobody ever heard of Macy Crewe.

Polly had three babies, and went on looking like a lost, lovely child. They had an apartment up in the

Bronx, now. Macy trained by working out new dance routines, and was never out of shape. We all settled into little grooves of life, like normal people. Jay got himself a middle-weight and a couple dumb heavies, and we did all right.

Macy even saved some—annuities. In a few years he could buy a bicycle-shop or something, and quit. Then he could take his portable victrola and

practice dance-steps when he wasn't working, and be happy, and his kids would grow up and go to school. . . . Well, you get it. Just an American working family.

BUT now Jay Larrabee is steaming things up, and I cannot understand why Macy goes for it. Macy had been around Jay for five years and should know better. Jay is a fat liar, a well-known Broadway heel. I do not remember Jay ever being on the square with anybody in this world, except maybe Macy; and to take Macy, would be like pinching off the heads of newborn babies.

Macy is a nice kid. Polly is a nice gal. Their kids are little tow-headed bugs. Everybody on Broadway loves them.

And now there is this phony build-up. Jay says to Ike Crane: "Why should Garcia get the championship shot without work? Why shouldn't he fight the warm-up with my boy? You clowns of the paid press are against a clean, American boy! You're a bunch of capitalistic tools of Max Krear!"

Ike just grins. He is not insulted. I do not understand it. Regan is tuning up in his corner, a real good boy who has fought in the Garden, a hitter. I run my hand over Macy, who is lean and calm, like always. I say: "Stay away from him, Macy. That's all. Just coast, boy. It don't mean nothin'."

Macy looks up at me. His eyes crinkle when he grins. He says: "Good old Willy. I'll be all right!"

I said: "This war stuff has got Jay crazy. He is always buying War Bonds and makin' speeches. Personally, and between you and I, he is a bit wheezy."

"Good old Willy," says Macy.

The bell rings. It is cracked, like Jay. Regan comes out, sliding, left hand up, head bobbing. He is a good boy. He is fancy with the left, ducking and leading.

Macy fights like Slattery, arms at his side. He is so good he looks bad. He does it all with his feet and quick hands. In and out and slide away—that is Macy. I have seen him a lot of times. He cannot be hit by Regan, not in the first round. Nor by anyone else, in the first round.

Regan is stubborn, very good. He tries to corner Macy on the ropes. Not my Macy. Not my boy. He does that kick-around with his left foot, and there he is, and Regan is the one on the ropes, and what Macy can do is pop him with the left and move away.

Then I am yelling, I don't even know what. Macy is not boxing. He is out of the corner, but he is not using the smooth long one. He is bull-

ing in, like any dope, swinging short ones, taking a solid right to the heart, I scream: "No!"

The crowd is yelling me down. Macy is throwing leather. I look for Jay, and he is crouched next to Ike Crane, all fat and staring with his pop eyes, his busted nose flat on his ugly face, his cigar dead in his mouth. I get back to Macy, my heart bleeding.

Somebody's down. . . . I can't look. I grab for the towel, the pail, anything. Macy is no fighter—he is just a good boy, a born hooper in the days of vaudeville. I started to climb into the ring. Jay grabs me, and we tangle in the corner a minute, and he says: "You dope, Willy! I can't ever teach you anything. You are thick like a mule, you dope!"

I get loose and stare. It is not Macy. It is Regan. He is flat, and the referee is counting to a million, maybe. I get into the ring with my head buzzing. Macy helps me pick up Regan.

Macy says: "Nice old Willy. You taught me that. Never wanted to use it before."

This I do not get. This to me is crazy business. Jay Larrabee and Macy against me. I go away. I leave them, and I brood.

IN no time at all the merry-go-round is whirling, and Polly put the kids to bed and came out and said: "Willy, I do not know. I leave everything to Macy, like always. He has been the best—the dearest—" She weeps.

I tear what little hair is left. The papers say: "Garcia will fight Macy Crewe." Ike Crane says: "Unde-

ing. We train indoors, of course. The people come to watch and Macy gives them a show. He's always at that dancing. He sees Astaire in a picture, and comes home and works out routines.

I say: "Boy, you have got to sharpen up for Garcia. He is no Regan. He is fast and good. He is a Navy fighter. They turned Jack Sharkey out of the Navy fighters' ranks. You have got to sharpen up."

Macy says: "Good old Willy. You are my pal. Look, this is the way Astaire goes over the furniture."

I love him. I go down and get Jay Larrabee. The fat slob is counting his dough. I say: "You big son of a mule—"

Jay says: "Mules do not have offspring. Save your invective, Willy. There is a war on. Have you bought a bond this week?"

I says: "You are going to get that boy killed! Garcia will positively beat the champ, and that is how good he really is. I know fighters, and I am telling you."

Jay says: "Nice Willy! Go and train our fighter."

"He's no fighter, and you know it!" I yell. "He is a hooper!"

"Why, so he is!" said Jay, as though he just found it out. "And a very excellent one, too. I was watching him today."

This Jay Larrabee has a moon-shaped face, except where his nose is busted so bad, which makes it look like a cheese with a cruller pasted on it. His eyes pop at you, and sometimes the lids come down and they go out of sight. Revolting! I says: "If

that kid gets hurt, Jay Larrabee, I will bust every bone in your body. I will give you two lumps for every one he gets. He should not even be in the same street with Garcia. Were we doing bad in the clubs? Polly was putting a little away right along, was she not?"

"Not enough," breaks in Jay, scowling like a baboon. "There is a war going on, Willy. You are an old rumbum, slap-happy character, Willy. Go away and mumble at yourself."

MACY and Polly sit in their nice living-room. Their furniture, even the piano, is paid for. I said: "Why do this, Macy? You are far from slug-nutty. Why must you fight this Garcia, this killer?"

Macy just laughs. Polly twists her hands in her lap. One of the babies wakes up and weeps, and Polly goes out of the room. Macy stops laughing and says:

"Willy! Do not say any more. This is a thing must be done. I need that money, that big purse."

I says: "Welters don't draw such big dough! It is not that big!"

Macy talks fast: "It's the annuity, Willy. This will pay it up. It has got to be paid up, now. The income starts right away. I have made up my mind, Willy, so don't upset Polly!"

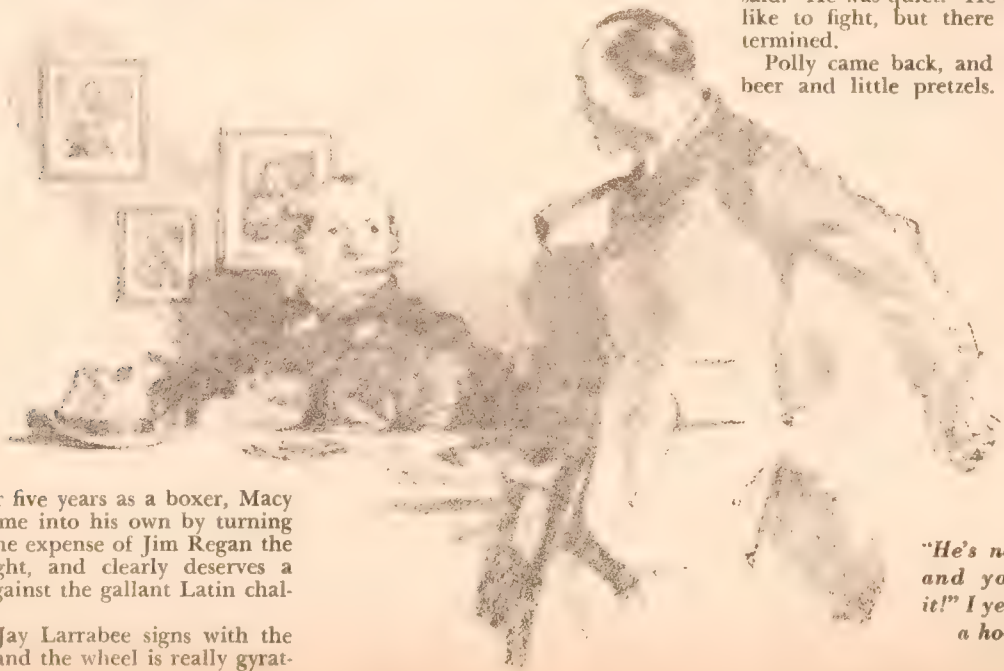
"You are going to join up!" I was starched with fear.

"I've got three kids," said Macy. "There has got to be a place for my kids."

"There are a million guys without kids!"

"There is only one Macy Crewe," he said. He was quiet. He did not even like to fight, but there he was, determined.

Polly came back, and brought out beer and little pretzels. The radio



feated for five years as a boxer, Macy Crewe came into his own by turning tiger at the expense of Jim Regan the other night, and clearly deserves a chance against the gallant Latin challenger."

Then Jay Larrabee signs with the Garden, and the wheel is really gyrate-

"He's no fighter, and you know it!" I yell. "He is a hooper!"

*Illustrated by
Raymond
Sisley*



*Somebody's down. . . . I can't
look. I grab for the towel, the
pail—anything.*

played a tune from Philly De Rose's latest show, and Macy was all grins again, saying: "Look, Willy! A new routine! Like this, see?"

And he danced, light-footed as two feathers, gliding about the room, but with comedy too, that made Polly catch her breath and gurgle, laughing. I drank my beer. I got up and went downtown.

At that hour you can find them all in Ribben's Café. Jay Larrabee was there, talking to a little fellow with a derby hat. You see that derby, and it is Philly De Rose. He clings to it through style and storm.

Jay said: "Willy, why are you not home between the sheets? It is late for a punchy like you to be walking up and down the thoroughfares of this great city."

I said: "I want to talk to De Rose. I staked him once, in Chi—that was 1930."

The starved face under the derby didn't look any better for the years—thin and pinched. Philly said: "I al-

ready talked to Jay. I will be downtown tomorrow. G'by."

He went away. I looked at Jay. I said: "We can say Macy broke his hand."

"Maybe De Rose won't like him," said Jay.

"He will love him," I said. I knew it. Like I knew my name, I knew it. "Macy will not have to fight Garcia."

"No," said Jay. He opened his eyes wide. "But did I not perform a miracle? Did I not engineer this fight single-handed? Did I not promote a strictly club-fighter into the Garden?"

"You did," I told him. It was enough for him. If it made him feel good, it was more than enough.

His eyelids drooped again. His voice was low and funny. "I certainly would have enjoyed seeing it. The boxer against the killer! The promoter's dream! I certainly would have enjoyed it!"

"You would send that kid in there and enjoy it?" I could have punched him in the nose. I said: "You are the toughest character I have ever known, Jay Larrabee. You are a ghoul!"

He sat there, hunched up, a fat man with no eyes, just a busted beak and a moon face. He was a strange one. He had been a fighter himself, and a good one. He had an education. He read books, but nobody ever knew it excepting me. I left him there with his brandy and soda. I was satisfied. It was going to be all right. Macy couldn't miss with De Rose.

I was right about that, anyway. De Rose took one look, in the gym, while Macy was clowning. That night they had the audition downtown, where they were building up the new show. Polly was there and held my hand, her face white. Macy seemed bewildered.

But when the music played, Macy danced. How could he help dancing? It was in his blood, and for five years it had been just an act, for the people to smile at and then walk away. Now De Rose and his dance-director and all those chorines were watching, and Matty Reid, the star, all blonde and Southern and interested, a nice clean new kid who hugged Polly and yelled: "Honey, he's *sho'* got it! He's the dancin'est fool this side of Astaire!"

De Rose was actually excited. Macy stood in the midst of it all. Jay Larrabee chewed on his cigar and was silent for once. I hugged both Polly and the Reid kid and babbled.

IT was like a bomb falling. Macy was saying: "Thank you, Mr. De Rose. It'll always be the best thing ever happened to me. You don't know how I regret that I can't take your fine and generous offer. My application for a commission is filed."

My arms dropped. The Reid collapsed on a chair. Jay Larrabee fished out a fresh cigar. Polly just stood and was calm, like a rock against which all our feelings dashed and splashed. De Rose was kayoed, right on the button.

Macy said in his polite voice: "You see, I've—I—got a couple of things to do. A man's life—he's got to do things a certain way."

There was argument. Jay Larrabee said nothing, though. I did. I said plenty. De Rose helped me, and the Reid. But Polly and Jay said nothing.

We went out of there and up to the apartment in the Bronx, but it was all hopeless. After a while, Jay and I left. We rode the subway downtown to Ribben's. We sat in the back.

Jay Larrabee said: "Willy, life is like this: You go along through the years, and you think you know yourself, know your friends. Then things happen. There is a great war, like this war. If you ever read anything but *Ring* and the *Sporting News*, you would understand better about the war."

"Nuts to you!" I said. "The Russians are winnin', and we are in Africa. We will get together with MacArthur and the Irish, and we will win in two months."

"Wonderful, Willy!" said Jay. "Brief and pungent! But Macy Crewe has three kids. You have none. I have none. And for five years, although we knew it not, Macy has been a fighter. And now he is determined not to change his stripes, not to deviate from the line of his predetermined course."

I said: "Such talk!"

"We thought we knew Macy. We did not. He will fight Garcia, and he will probably be half killed," said Jay heavily. "And then he will go into the Air Corps or the tanks or something and fulfill what he believes to be his destiny. That is the way it is with life, Willy."

"I do not understand such talk," I said. "Macy is off his conk. The war will be over—"

"He does not want it to be over," said Jay. "Until he gets in. His pay and his annuities will keep Polly. Macy, whom we thought of as our stooge, is a man."

It was not like the talk of Jay Larrabee. It was sort of sad, and his chin sagged more and more. I got up and went away. I went downtown farther and found a gin-mill, and for the first time in ten years I got as plastered as a skunk.

Sometimes a man learns things late in life, and it is amazing to him that he can still take in the new things, so that he scarcely believes in himself. We were up there in the Garden ring,

the white lights staring down at us, and Macy is cool like cake and ice-cream. Jay Larrabee is working the corner tonight, with me, just the two of us. Polly is there, for the first time in years, to see it.

Macy said: "It's all right, I feel fine."

He grins. Garcia, in the other corner, is a little Dempsey, nervous, bearded, swarthy, game to his backbone, biting on the mouthpiece. He has bulky shoulders, and he is shorter than Macy, and fights from a crouch. I say: "For the love of all of us, box him! You're no mixer, Macy!"

Macy's grin slides off. He says: "Nice Willy! Doesn't want me hurt. Good Willy!" But he don't like it.

I climb down. Jay is puffing from the exertion already. The steps are steep, going up into the ring. It would be tough carrying Macy down those steps if he got hurt bad. This Garcia can hurt bad, believe me. He is a depth-bomb, this Navy fighter.

De Rose is there with Polly; Matty Reid is there, in a mink coat. They are all silent and white-faced. Then I see another guy with them, in a uniform. He is a major or a colonel, or something. He has a meat-cleaver for a face. I do not like this guy on sight. He looks tough and mean.

THEY ring that damned bell, and it cuts into my heart. I watch Garcia, looking for faults, so I can tell Macy. The brown boy is good—but very good. He comes out low and his stance is easy and he breathes right. He measures Macy.

They box. Garcia respects Macy's left, but keeps boring in to the right. He carries lead in those fists, and he drops them in Macy's ribs. There are red spots, and the fight just begun. I keep pulling in my elbows in sympathy for Macy's lean body.

Macy just dances like he hadn't a care in the world. He watches Garcia and takes those body wallops and dances right and left, his own long one going in. He is pinning Garcia, but always on that hard skull.

This Garcia is serious. He is a fighter. How can they lick a nation that produces these Garcias and Armstrongs—yes, and Barney Ross too? They say fighters are such bums. . . .

Garcia showed them bums! Garcia showed them how to fight a boxer. Easy, coming in, taking it on the head and neck, counter-punching. The round ended, and I was in there. I said: "Faster! Faster! He's awful good! He's the best in the world. I tell you, Macy."

Jay said nothing. He wiped Macy's neck with the towel. Macy said nothing. I was the corner boss. I talked, but it was spitting into the wind. Garcia was good.

The second round was half over when Macy caught one on the kisser. He slipped, too. He went down. I took up the count, and then I was cool, my excitement gone. One, two, three—I showed him the fingers; and Macy's eyes crinkled at the corners; four, five, six—he got up on one knee; seven, eight, nine—he got up.

He went backward like a dream walking. He flicked out with that paint-brush jab, the best since Charley Weinert. He kept Garcia off balance, and I was proud of him. He got back on good legs. I said: "You can last. You can't win, but you can stick. It will hurt you, but you can do it!"

Macy said: "Why, Willy! You want me to stick!"

I said: "What did you think?"

"You always babied me! Good Willy!" He grinned again.

IN the seventh I looked down for a second at Polly. They should take her out. Macy was catching it now. Garcia had the range, and his heavy guns were loosening thunder. *Boom!* Macy hit the deck, and I caught the count for the fourth time.

Macy nodded to me. He put his hands on the floor and tried his strength, pushing. He was lopsided, but he could make it. Garcia rested in the neutral corner. He had a shanty on his eye from Macy's left, but he was strong and good.

Macy was up at eight. He was too anxious, now. He was pushing it. I looked back at Polly, and she was tearing a handkerchief to nothing, but she was not afraid, and she was not complaining. I knew then that Polly wanted Macy to stick.

I looked at Jay, and he was paler than tissue paper, but his chins were solid. His eyes kept shooting fire out there, and he had lost his cigar. I took a deep breath and reached for the collodium. The round was eleven seconds to go.

There was a howl, I almost dropped the bottle. I howled: "The corner, Macy! Get over!"

Macy stood there, dumb. His hands were down. Garcia was down more from a push than a clean punch. Macy had to get away, take that little rest while the referee got it organized, wiped off Garcia's gloves. . . .

But the brown boy came up like a rubber ball, and Macy was beaten and slow. Garcia's left clashed alongside Macy's jaw, the right went behind it. He was a machine-gun, with hand grenades, that Garcia.

I had the clock figured. I watched the timekeeper. I said: "Get up there fast, Jay!"

The clock saved us, for that time. I was in the ring, and had Macy in my arms in two jumps. He was colder than a haddock. Jay helped me hold

him on the stool, and the referee came peering, nosy, wanting to stop it if Macy was bad hurt.

Macy woke up halfway through the rest period. He opened his eyes and looked at Jay, then at me. He said: "It's like this. It's that I'm going to fight. You've taken care of me, you two. You're nice, Jay. You're good, Willy. You're my pals. Don't let that referee stop it, pals."

He was half goofy at the bell. We crouched together, Jay and me, like two doorway bums in a storm. We saw Garcia come careful, always a good workman, taking his time for an expert finish. He would be the champ, that Garcia.

Macy took one turn around the ring. His legs were so swift, it was like the fight was beginning again. Garcia, slower, iron-faced, stopped. He beckoned Macy to come and fight, standing like a bull at ring center.

Macy's grin flashed, all ugly with the mouthpiece gripped in his teeth. He dropped both hands and stuck out his head for Garcia to finish him right then and there. He had his heels planted and it was the end, and everyone knew it.

Garcia had to meet the thing, the way it was done. He charged, not too smart, slinging both hands to the head. Macy ducked, forgetting to box or stand away. He brought up both those clever fast hands and left his feet where they were.

The leather crossed, too fast for even me to follow. I was poised to go in and pick up the pieces. I was standing there, on the brink of nothing, my breath bursting in my lungs.

I saw Macy's right chop upward as his body swung. I saw him do it again, almost slowly, this time. I saw Garcia catch it on the button. I saw the third punch, with Macy's heels still gripping canvas, a pivoting roundhouse from strictly corn, a blow any amateur could duck.

Garcia's hands dropped. He turned a little away from Macy. He took a short, staggering step. He lay down, as though he was very tired. He did not stir. The count began. . . . It ended.

Jay Larrabee was in the ring ahead of me. I just stood there, holding on to the apron. I couldn't let go of my breath. It was like having your only son come through a spell of sickness.

Macy came over and Jay was putting the robe around him. Macy's face was bloody and out of shape. He looked over at Polly, and his grin crept up the good side of his pan. Then he went out of there, through the howling mob. I still couldn't believe it, not even in the dressing-room could I believe it.

Jay was talking to Ike Crane, only Jay's voice was like that night in Rib-

ben's, low and different from usual. He said:

"This boy, this Macy Crewe—you could say he is a man. You could say he fought this fight because the people who had supported him all these years had looked forward to it. He was never a fighter, in ordinary times, and we admit that. He was a boxer, a manufactured performer with the gloves. He could have boxed Garcia for fifteen rounds without getting hurt too bad—I know he could."

Well, maybe. Maybe Macy could have, at that. I opened the door and let the major, or colonel come in. He walked over to Macy, where he sat on the dressing-table with Polly close to him, and held out his hand. The hatchet-face opened on a slit and said: "The Army lost a good man when your application was rejected because of time limitations, Crewe. But the Department has decided that you family men should stand behind and wait your turn."

Jay Larrabee went on: "You see, Ike, he tried to get in, believed he would get in. When he didn't make it because of the new ruling, he decided to make this his fight. He had to follow that line he had laid out. Five years—he fought a great boy tonight. . . . That Garcia will kill the champ!"

Ike said: "But Macy will get the champ, now!"

Jay said: "You footless, fumbling fool! You cretin from the ooze of abysmal fool! Have you not heard of Philly De Rose's new show, 'Walking in Springtime,' starring Matty Belle Reid and Macy Crewe, an extravaganza to end all super-song-and-dance operas? Rush off and tell your dramatic editor to be prepared to receive Jay Larrabee and learn of love and laughter behind the footlights of the Jollity Theater starting next month, maybe the 15th!"

Ike said: "You always land on your flat feet, Jay! But what about Willy?"

Jay looked at me. Macy and Polly patted my shoulder. I felt like a danged fool. Jay said: "You sports writers are notorious only for your ignorance! The draft board accepted that decrepit no-account yesterday."

WELL, I'm thirty-six and single. And those little kids up in the Bronx—

Macy meant to go, didn't he? So they wouldn't let him, so I'm glad it's me. I got it on Jay Larrabee, anyway. They turned him down, flat!

I felt sorry for Jay. A man learns a lot of things even after he thinks it's too late to learn anything. But Jay will be all right. He's a tough character, that one. God help any Nazis that show their heads along the Broadway of Jacobs Beach!



A girl and some Apaches teach a stubborn Quaker the realities of life.

The Last Cartridge

by Ray Nafziger

THE thunder which awoke William Hicks on his rawhide-and-pole cot in the Cottonwood change station was so gentle that it could have been the light rumble of surrey wheels over a turnpike bridge. Since Arizona Territory lacked both surreys and turnpikes, it had to be thunder. In July thunder always meant rain, which would cheer his little garden.

William Hicks dressed briskly in the whitewashed adobe room and stepped outdoors. A storm was pulling a bluish-black blanket over the

domed peak to the west. The sun was not yet up and the little valley in which the stagecoach station sat was still a dusky trough. Under the green mesquites of the low ridge to the south the gray pony used for wrangling stagecoach teams had quit his grazing and was standing, ears pricked sharply, looking toward the rocky-floored wash dropping from the Tornillos.

What sounded at first like faint steady thunder came from up the wash, changing soon into a tattoo of racing hoofs. Flashing through the

high mesquite appeared a horseman, young Dick Mowbray, who ranched on Soldier Flats. He rode a black gelding and led at the end of a horse-hair rope a spider-legged sorrel race mare. Seeing the tender before the station door, Mowbray began shouting some unintelligible message, ending in a series of war-whoops.

William Hicks smiled. Young Dick Mowbray was full of playful humors. Next instant the gelding and the led mare climbed through a notch in the bank of the wash and were pulled up short before the station door.



Return shots were coming, and the Mexican suddenly slumped.

"Fetch your saddle and throw it on my mare, Quaker!" the rider ordered. "We've got to get to the fort. Hustle! 'Paches! They're headed this way." As he spoke, Mowbray kept his gaze warily shifting over the mesquite ridges.

"The last report, Dick," said the tender mildly, "was that Geronimo had gone into New Mexico."

Dick Mowbray grunted. "Hell, this aint Geronimo's bunch. It's those snakes of Chief Antonio's in Cordes Cañon. They killed four prospectors and tried to massacre those Mormon families on Piedras Mesa last night, and they're comin' straight this way. Dell Hitson's hand rode past my ranch carryin' the alarm."

"Thee must be wrong, Dick," said William Hicks, lapsing, as he did occasionally, into the pronouns learned from his mother. "Thee knows the Cordes Cañon people are peaceful. Chief Antonio is my good friend. He has camped overnight here with me often."

"Listen, Quaker!" ordered Dick Mowbray harshly. "There's no time to waste palaverin'. Straddle the mare quick, and let's get out of here."

William Hicks, patting the nervous little sorrel, shook his head. "You ride on, Dick. This is stage day."

Dick Mowbray frowned into the serene blue eyes of the tender. "Climb on, you blasted tenderfoot!" he shouted hoarsely. "There'll be no coach along today. Stay here, and your peaceful good friend Antonio will spread-eagle you to that door and stick rows of lighted pitch-pine splinters on your naked chest."

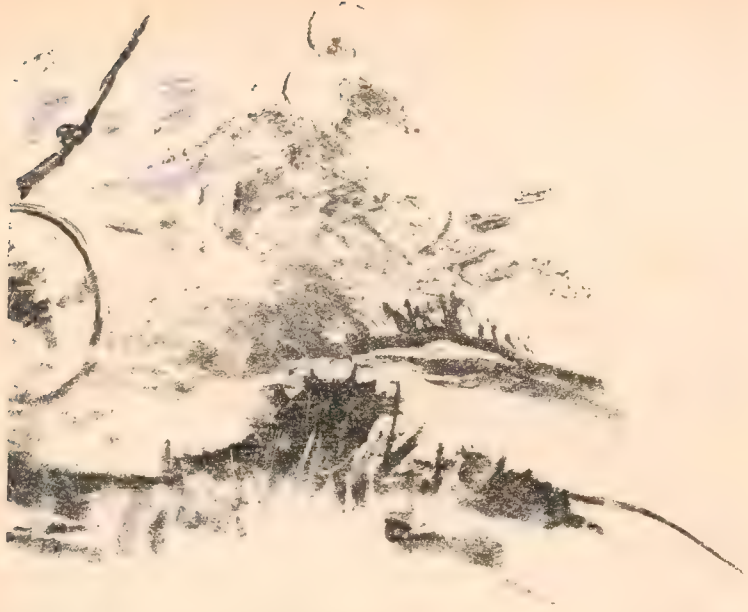
The tender shook his head resolutely. "I thank thee, Dick, but I promised not to be frightened from my post by rumors of raids. Thee had best get down and have breakfast."

Dick Mowbray gazed on William Hicks with the same grim pity that a religious father might observe a way-

ward son whose shoes are already scorched by hell-fire. Reaching into a saddlebag, Mowbray flung a handful of cartridges through the station door, and galloped away, leading his race mare after him. . . .

William Hicks calmly prepared breakfast in the corner fireplace. He was worried about Dick Mowbray's safety. Should Apache renegades actually be abroad, a man racing about the country would draw them after him, as a moving object will cause a coiled rattler to strike.

FROM his uncle, who was one of a number of Quaker Indian agents, William Hicks had learned much about Apaches. Their raids stemmed only from the scurvy treatment given the Apache tribes by grafting and incompetent officials. The thousands of prospectors flocking into the Southwestern Territories had scattered and killed the deer that were the Apaches' natural food. The solution of the Apache problem was simple: Given a weekly issue of beef and the kind of productive farm-lands which had been reserved for Chief Antonio's little group in Cordes Cañon, these Apaches were as peaceable as rabbits. The report that Chief Antonio was



raiding, was of course wrong. Antonio, speaking a mixture of English and sign-talk on his visits to Cottonwood Station to borrow tobacco or salt, had shown himself a peaceable, genial human being, possessed of a keen sense of humor and a deep understanding of the conflict between red men and white.

Thunder rolled again out of the moving bluish-black cloud blanket and as if in echo came a harsh blast of sound from beyond the low ridge to the south. Guns! The tender stepped to the door. Dick Mowbray had ridden north, so the shooting could have nothing to do with him.

Again the explosions came, louder and in distinct claps, as if a playful giant was clubbing the side of a barn.

William Hicks frowned, puzzled. The stage was not due until noon, but the three ponderous six-horse wagons of Don Diego Garcia were due to pass the station early that day freighting supplies to Redbird mining camp. Sometimes Garcia's swart teamsters fired at flocks of feather-footed antelope, but when a savage hooting sounded faintly between the blare of rifles, the tender knew that antelope were not the targets this morning.

Hanging over his shelf of books was a rifle he had often used in hunting; but, typical of William Hicks' peaceful nature, he left the weapon behind when he began running toward the low ridge. The hobbled gray pony had disappeared into the mesquite; there was no time to look for him.

Following the road which cut through the ridge by way of a narrow rocky slot, the tender paused to catch

his breath and to take a survey. At the foot of the low ridge sounded a loud hammer of hoofs and a wild rattle of wheels, but the tall brush hid both vehicle and team. Less than four hundred yards from the foot of the ridge, were strung out three high tarpaulin-covered wagons. One or more of each six-horse team had been shot, evidently to halt the outfits. The drivers had disappeared, and about the wagons swarmed horsemen, clad only in breechcloths and in stub-toed moccasins, with bands of cloth wound about their hair—the war uniform of the Apache.

William Hicks' eyes were keen enough to identify these warriors. Dick Mowbray had been right. This was Chief Antonio's little band. He identified Antonio himself and his brother Noposo, squat, wiry bodies

shining with the gloss of new copper. Something was wrong with the answer William Hicks' Quaker uncle had given to the Apache problem. Something more than beef rations, and corn and squash land, was needed to keep certain Apaches pacific.

Meanwhile the rattling of wheels and hammer of hoofs were moving swiftly up the ridge and suddenly from the cloaking mesquite raced two shaggy-coated dun ponies, yanking after them the rickety buckboard in which Don Diego accompanied his freighter wagons. Not Don Diego but a woman held the reins, and from her frantic shouts it seemed plain that she was unable to check the run-aways. Black-bearded Don Diego Garcia sat beside her, twisted about in the seat, firing a rifle at the horsemen about the wagons. Return shots were coming and the Mexican suddenly slumped. The butt of the rifle that slipped from his hands struck against the spinning wheel rim and was flung high in the air.

ON the station side of the ridge the trail twisted sharply in a steep drop that was almost certain to pile the vehicle and its passengers in a broken heap. As William Hicks saw it, there was only one thing to do: When the last steep lift of the grade slowed the team, he flung himself at the head of the offside pony, catching a rein close to the bit and using his weight as a rough-block. With the driver sawing on the lines, the ponies came to a halt.

"What are you trying to do?" shouted the woman, and Mr. Hicks stared in astonishment. She was an American, young, a comely, competent-looking girl, with thick plaits of





"Mister, them's Apache renegades," she cried. "I know 'em!"

brown hair wound about her bare head. Looking at her, William Hicks ignored for the moment the fact that the Apaches had left the wagons and were racing along the trail toward the ridge. The girl gave a startled cry as Garcia's weight slumped helplessly against her shoulder. Then coolly she shifted the Mexican to an upright position, and ran an exploring hand over a bloody streak in the stiff black hair.

"Head scraped," she said. Then, "Where did you spring from?" she demanded of the tender. "Hustle, scramble in! There's a stage station just over the ridge, Mr. Garcia said."

"The station is only a few hundred yards," said William Hicks. "I'm the tender. But there is no danger."

"Climb in!" she snapped; and William Hicks, leaping agilely over the cramped wheel, wedged part of his person into the narrow seat beside

Garcia. At once the girl yelled furiously at the team, and the vehicle went on, bouncing and swaying violently down through the sea of mesquite covering the ridge.

"No bottom to these duns," muttered the girl. "Never saw a Mexican pony yet that hadn't had the heart run out of him."

THE gate to the small adobe-walled corral which joined the station was open. Straight through it the rig whirled, to stop with the ponies' noses against the door leading into the house.

"Close that gate!" ordered the girl and Mr. Hicks hurriedly swung shut the double gates of plank, and dropped the heavy oak bar in its slots.

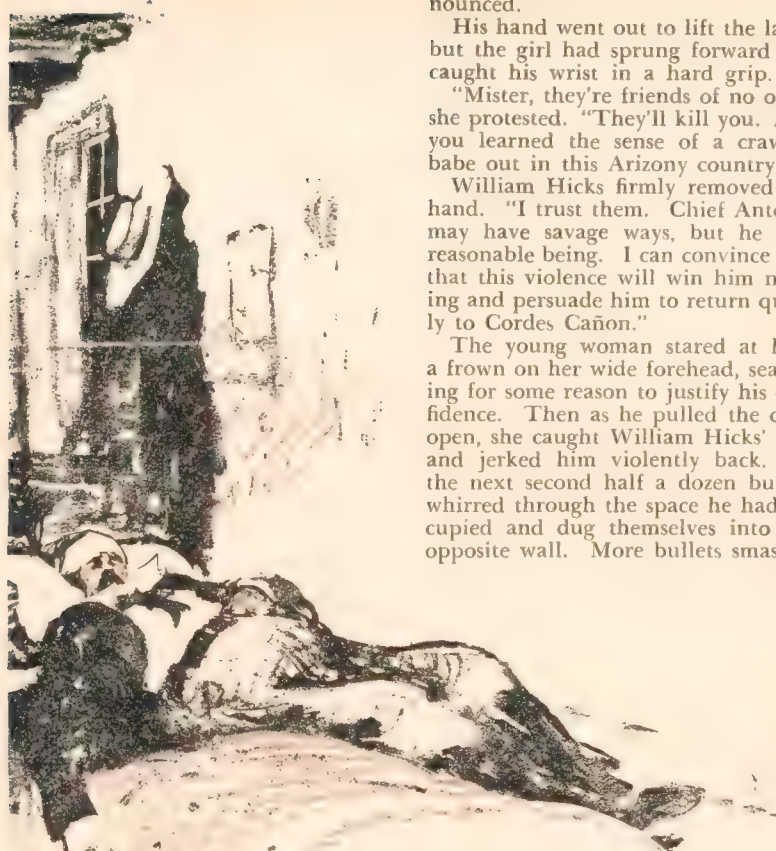
"There's no danger," he repeated as he came back, to find the girl dragging the smallish Garcia from the buckboard. Hicks carried the man

indoors, and deposited him on the rawhide-and-pole cot. The blood was clotting in Don Diego's hair, and he muttered deliriously in Spanish.

A violent racket of yells and drumming hoofs was flowing down off the ridge; and through the window William Hicks saw Antonio's tribesmen plummeting toward the station, heels beating the ribs of their ponies. Incongruously a bolt of looted calico floated back in two long streamers from one rider's waist.

"Just a hoss-race, is it?" said the girl; and William Hicks turned to see her snatch his rifle from above the bookshelf, and run to the square high south window. Reaching it, she shattered the panes with one sweeping blow of the rifle-butt.

"Don't shoot!" shouted William Hicks, but the rifle crashed on the heels of his words. The horse of the lead rider somersaulted, sending his



rider soaring in a grotesque spread of arms and legs. Promptly the others whirled their mounts into the mesquite.

"Carry low, do you?" the girl muttered reprovingly at the rifle, and inspected the sights.

"You should not have fired at them," William Hicks told her sternly. "It will only anger them. They are friends of mine and will not hurt us. Their leader, Chief Antonio, has often visited me here."

The girl turned her gray eyes to stare incredulously at the station tender. "Not hurt us?" she asked wonderingly. "Mister, have you gone plumb loco? If they get at us, they'll rub us out like a school kid usin' his shirt-sleeve and spit, on a slate."

A bullet from an Apache rifle sent glass from the west window tinkling to the floor, and passed on to puncture a picture hung above the fireplace. William Hicks strode with a calm dignity to the door. "I'm going

out to talk to my friends," he announced.

His hand went out to lift the latch, but the girl had sprung forward and caught his wrist in a hard grip.

"Mister, they're friends of no one!" she protested. "They'll kill you. Aint you learned the sense of a crawlin' babe out in this Arizony country?"

William Hicks firmly removed her hand. "I trust them. Chief Antonio may have savage ways, but he is a reasonable being. I can convince him that this violence will win him nothing and persuade him to return quietly to Cordes Cañon."

The young woman stared at him, a frown on her wide forehead, searching for some reason to justify his confidence. Then as he pulled the door open, she caught William Hicks' arm and jerked him violently back. In the next second half a dozen bullets whirled through the space he had occupied and dug themselves into the opposite wall. More bullets smashed

into the wood panels of the door as she slammed it shut.

"You ignorant knothead!" she cried, exasperated. "I ought to of let you traipse out there to get yourself killed. Mister, them's Apache renegades. I was born and reared close to 'em. I know 'em!"

The station tender, shocked to the core, stared at her and at the ugly pits the slugs had dug in his white-washed wall. The girl was right. Antonio and his warriors, fired probably by the strong *tiswin* liquor they occasionally made, were plainly past the reasoning stage. They would slaughter the girl, Don Diego and himself, and if the three were taken alive, also make their deaths the lingering tortured dying that was told and retold all over Arizona Territory.

He had been mistaken: Those creatures outside were not reasoning men. Nothing remained but to fight them back, kill to keep from being killed.

"I know 'em," the young woman repeated as she watched at the window. "All my family knows them; my brother can tell you just how well we know them, for they killed our folks. My brother ranches somewhere in this country—on a place called Soldier Flats. Mowbray is his name. Maybe you know him?"

The tender nodded. "Dick Mowbray? He rode by this morning—to the fort. I recall that he made mention of a sister, Ellen, living with an uncle in a mining camp."

"Ellen—that's me. We had to clear out with Geronimo rampagin' round. I reached Tucson Sunday, and Don Diego offered to bring me in his rig to Fort Majors where I could get word to Dick. There wasn't a smell of trouble when we left. But there just don't seem to be no keepin' away from the ornery pests."

Standing at the side of the window, she was preparing to take aim again, and hastily William Hicks stepped to her side. "I will take the rifle," he told her. "You keep back. Give it to me," he insisted as she hesitated. "It is my rifle, and this is my house. It is no time to boast, but I am expert with a rifle, as your brother Dick could tell you."

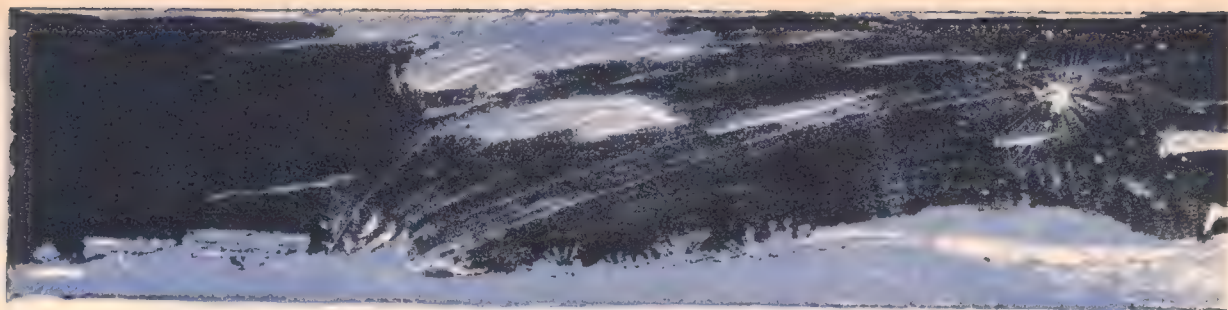
Reluctantly she surrendered the long-barreled weapon, which he had used often on hunting trips with Mowbray. All about the station the menacing hooting became louder, and the crash of the rifles grew. Bullets hailed in, and a scream came from one of Don Diego's ponies. In the walled corral, too low to protect the animals, the ponies lay in their harness, one kicking a little.

GRIM-FACED, William Hicks returned to the room, to slip from window to window. He doubted there would be an open rush. Apaches practiced a skulking kind of warfare. Never in the fashion of the Plains Indians did they ever circle their horses in a sort of silly merry-go-round about cornered whites. Instead, their strategy was that of a cautious advance, always capably intended to force the defenders into a rapid exhaustion of their ammunition.

This band contained not more than twenty warriors, but they made themselves seem fifty. A group quickly gathered behind the high bank of the wash directly east of the station. From this wash a shallow dry ditch angled toward the walled corral. Along this ditch several naked clay-daubed bodies began sliding, lizard-like.

Carefully the tender planted a bullet in one exposed rump. That one shot made them all retreat, with such yells of rage that William Hicks shivered, not for himself, but for those who were in a manner his guests and under his protection.

Soberly he weighed their chances. He had but a limited number of cartridges for their one weapon, the rifle. He remembered the handful of cartridges Dick Mowbray had chucked through the doorway, and asked Ellen Mowbray, who had just bandaged Don Diego's head, to gather them.



William Hicks counted them and his own supply over and over, as a miser counts gold-pieces. Each was in fact a coin—to purchase a certain number of minutes of life. When they were gone, the defense of Cottonwood Station would be bankrupt.

The air, heavy with the slow approach of the storm, covering the sun, became filled with the tang of burnt powder. William Hicks, searching for targets, breathed the smoke with a sudden savage pleasure: the odor of powder used in defending innocent lives is good in a man's nostrils.

Ellen Mowbray kept watch for him from the door opening into the corral, calling to him when her sharp eyes caught a suspicious movement in the sacaton grass north of the station.

Tranquilly he replied to the blasts of the guns which were mingling with the deepening voice of the storm. Lightning was claving the clouds with its forked fires: wind began to stir through the mesquite.

William Hicks counted his few cartridges again and asked the girl to search the wounded Garcia's pockets. She found nothing, but thinking of the buckboard in the corral, he ran out to search seat and floor, finding five cartridges of the same caliber as his rifle. Five coins to buy a few more minutes! A man had to receive with fortitude whatever came, but Ellen Mowbray should never be put to that trial. There would be one cartridge saved for her.

Returning to the house, he noticed a small tarpaulin-covered cargo lashed to the back of the buckboard. He tore off the canvas, and dropped it, disappointed. Cartridges did not come in wooden boxes of that size.

THERE was another slithering advance along the dry ditch; and to force a second retreat, six exploded cartridges were dropped on the dirt floor.

And again the minutes dragged until, in the sacaton waving under the breeze, Ellen Mowbray's sharp eyes detected figures moving cloaked in a grass camouflage. After he had succeeded in driving these back, it was no longer necessary to count the cartridges. They were all in the rifle.

Persistently part of the band again tried the dry ditch, while from the slope of the ridge bullets slapped into the window-frames, forcing him to shoot hurriedly. He fired twice and waited, hesitating to expend another cartridge, fearing if he waited too long they might be encouraged to try a sudden rush on the corral. Two more shots were necessary to force a retreat.

Sweat beaded William Hicks' forehead. The thunder overhead hammered painfully in his brain. When he spoke to Ellen Mowbray, it was with a dry throat: "We are through, Ellen. One cartridge left, and they must realize the use I have for that."

Ellen Mowbray, flushed with the excitement of the fight, looked at him, puzzled. "One cartridge?" she echoed. "What else would you use it for except for droppin' another varmint?" Then she guessed suddenly. "You mean—for me?"

"It is all I can do for you, Ellen."

She moved her lips to reply, but was silent. Then when she spoke finally, her voice was steady. "But why didn't you save a cartridge for yourself and one for Don Diego?"

"Don Diego is unconscious and mercifully will not know what is done to him. As for me, I would not use a cartridge to buy release from pain, when it might be the one shot needed to persuade them to leave. They have already stayed longer than is safe for them. Your brother rode to the fort, knowing that Antonio's band was headed this way. A troop of cavalry may be coming here now. And besides, they won't take me alive. This rifle will make a good club."

Ellen Mowbray stepped close to him. "Look, Mister," she said: "I was raised in Apache country; I know about them. You go ahead and use that cartridge—my cartridge—to buy us a few more seconds. They won't take me alive neither, Mister. That's a good knife you have in your cup-board."

William Hicks, looking at the girl's resolute face, was moved. "'Bring forth men children only,'" he said, quoting from one of the well-thumbed volumes of his library shelf.

Don Diego was again muttering on the rawhide cot. Abruptly his voice

became strong and his words distinct. They turned to see him propped on an elbow, staring at the station tender.

"Señor Quaker," he addressed Hicks, "will you do me the favor to drive my buckboard to Redbird? The men there they say to me, 'Diego, you be sure come back Wednesday or we hang you, Diego.' W'at I breeng for them mus' be in Redbird *mañana*, tomorrow."

"*'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,'*" William Hicks quoted absent-mindedly, "*'creeps in this petty pace from day to day—'* Tomorrow!" he exclaimed sharply. "So it must be there tomorrow. And tomorrow is the fourth of this month."

Then he handed the rifle to Ellen Mowbray, and raced outside to unlash the wooden boxes from the buckboard.

ELLEN MOWBRAY snatched a moment from her sharp lookout to glance in at the corral. The tender was furiously busy splintering box-tops with a hatchet.

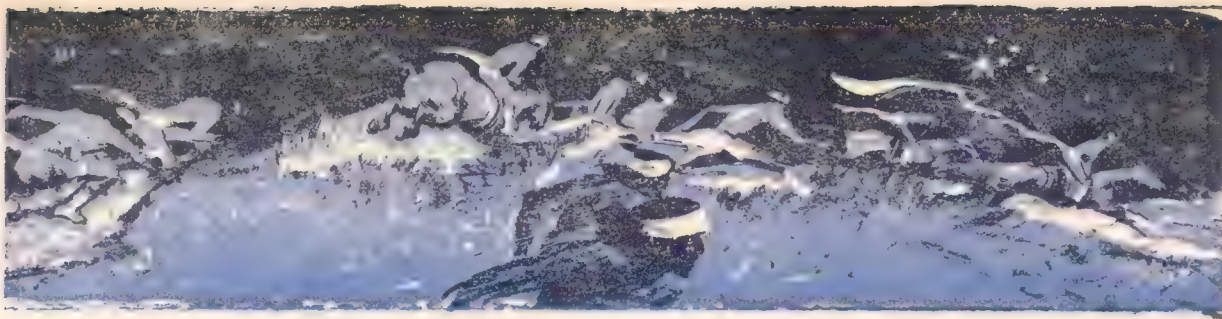
"Gone loco," she muttered as she resumed her watch at the windows. "Just like a kid tearing open packages at Christmas."

"Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow!" the tender yelled as she heard the crackle of a little fire in the corral. "Give me a little time—a few seconds—and there will be tomorrows for all of us. Watch them close, Ellen. Keep them off. Use that last cartridge if necessary. But give me a few seconds."

"In my little home town," he went on, "it would begin at the first sign of dawn—using the blacksmith's anvil and powder to shake the whole town. And here we were arguing about a single cartridge, when all this was under our noses! It's lucky that my

COMING in the

"Scots Hidalgo," a brilliant and swift-paced novel by Achmed Abdullah; a dramatic story of the North African front by our old friend William Makin; and many other notable contributions by Nel-



father gave me the money to be patriotic in the way boys hold proper. Once I nearly lost an eye. . . . They aren't leaving, are they?" William Hicks asked this question as if he would be vastly disappointed if informed the Apaches were departing.

"No, they haven't gone," Ellen Mowbray replied. "They still seem to be busy palavering in the wash. But what're you up to?"

There was no answer, and she looked through the doorway to see the tender touching a pitch-pine torch to a long slim pink cylinder mounted on a stick inserted in a crevice between the adobe bricks of the wall.

"Watch!" William Hicks yelled jubilantly. There was a loud hiss, and light streaked through the air, darting straight at the heart of the storm. Under the blanket of black cloud sounded a muffled boom. Gold stars exploded. While the golden comets were still falling, leaving long dangling golden tails, a second rocket whizzed savagely through the air, to explode above the ridge, this time in a shower of red stars.

Then in the corral William Hicks, emitting mad yells, lighted the fuses of three giant red cannon firecrackers and hurled them out over the cut bank of the wash. They fell not far from the dozen warriors conferring in the arroyo bottom. The booms of the great cylinders sounded like exploding artillery. Some of Antonio's band had been shot at by soldiers with small cannon, and remembered the results only too well. These men led the flight down the wash.

Ellen Mowbray, reluctantly saving the one cartridge in the rifle, hurried to the door opening into the adobe-walled corral. Perspiring, still shouting, the tender was leaping about like a man fighting off a nest of hornets,

hurling other cannon crackers like bombs, and fastening the sticks of rockets and Roman candles to the corral top and gate.

One rocket shot off horizontally seared the air ten feet above the heads of the fleeing warriors, to burst in an exploding fountain of light against a low rock cliff. That was too close—the band scattered into the mesquite like quail, and raced for their horses.

William Hicks, laughing gleefully, prepared a whole battery of rockets and candles and bombarded the ridge on which the Apaches had left their horses. The animals stampeded, trailing their long ropes, until one already mounted warrior turned them back to his companions. Hastily catching up the ropes, the whole band mounted hurriedly, to race up the slope of the ridge, beating their heels against their ponies' sides—while over them the bewildering devil meteors hissed and exploded in colored fire.

SO great was their haste, that to William Hicks' disappointment, they did not see the giant pinwheel he had hastily nailed on a gate-post where it revolved noisily, throwing out a scintillating circle of fire.

Ellen Mowbray began to laugh, and laughed until the tears came to her eyes. In the girl was the broad hearty humor of the frontier—and in her memory would always remain the crowning burlesque of one racing warrior who had been stabbed in the rump by a lance of fire just as he was hurdling a mesquite bush.

"Why don't they wait and see the rest of it?" asked William Hicks, hurt. "Over half of these fireworks left, and I suppose I got to save it for those Red-birders. Those miners, I've been told, brag that they put on the biggest Independence Day celebration in the Southwest, ordering everything in the line of fireworks that's made in China. It comes from San Francisco, on steamers up the Colorado River and freight wagons to Tucson."

Don Diego, still raised on an elbow, had watched the fireworks gloomily. "The *hombres* at Redbird, they will not like," he prophesied. "They say they will hang Diego if he do not breeng fireworkies *mañana*."

"I should have looked into those boxes sooner," William Hicks called to Ellen Mowbray. "If Don Diego hadn't spoken up about having to get this stuff to Redbird by tomorrow, I'd have had to—"

The horror of what he would have had to do overwhelmed the tender suddenly, and his gayety evaporated. He looked at the dead horses. A cannon cracker which rolled into the fire exploded with almost enough force to blow down a house. William Hicks jumped violently. Somberly he looked at Ellen Mowbray, leaning against the door-frame, her pretty face a little smudged. A competent young woman that at first sight he had thought was being run away by a team of ponies! Why, that girl could drive a span of mountain lions.

"Why so sorrowful?" she inquired.

William Hicks saw tolerant good humor in the gray eyes, along with sympathy and understanding.

"My mother was a Quaker," he told Ellen Mowbray quietly. "My father was a restless wanderer and a soldier. There have always been conflicts in my blood. One part listens to your brother, who has urged me to become partner on his ranch. The other hears the call to help these savages. I had planned to become an Indian agent, but today I showed my unworthiness. I lost patience. I wanted to kill them. Worse, I actually enjoyed trying to!"

Ellen Mowbray's eyes were grave. "I wouldn't let that worry you too much. For agents, they can get plenty of Quakers back East who won't lose patience. I think you should quit this two-bit change-station job and go in with Dick on his cattle ranch."

She smiled at William Hicks suddenly. "When Dick wrote asking me to join him," she went on, "he said there was a young neighbor out here that might make a good husband for me." She said this with a frankness that was not shameless nor bold, but was a simple matter-of-fact recognition of the scarcity of unmarried men in Arizona Territory. "His neighbor's name," she concluded, "was William Hicks."

"I am William Hicks," said the tender. "And I always considered your brother a man of good judgment."

NEAR FUTURE

son Bond, Gordon Keyne, Herbert Ravenel Sass, H. Bedford-Jones, Thomas Walsh, Phil Magee, William Brandon, Richard Sale, Bigelow Neal and Arch Whitehouse.

The BUNCO MATE

THE Old Man was genial, always a bad sign. Don Bartlett entered warily. "Miss Laird, this is our third officer, Mr. Bartlett," the skipper said. "He is the young man who had you in tow when you christened the *West Dartvale*. Mr. Bartlett, you remember Miss Elspeth Laird."

"Yes sir," said Donald Bartlett officially. He contrived to smile at Elspeth Laird, who was tightening her lips. If this small, brown-haired girl had been about four years younger she would probably have stuck out her tongue at him. That was the sort she was.

The Old Man cleared his throat.

"The town of West Dartvale, for which we were named, has read of the rather hot time we had on our last run eastbound. Mr. Bartlett, and of Quartermaster Mulqueen's outstanding heroism on that occasion and—uh—your own conduct."

"It was just second nature to me, sir," old Mulqueen spoke up. "Instinctive, like."

He advanced to the Old Man's desk and supported himself on it with a hard lump of a fist. "I see it was up to me and I says to myself—"

The Old Man interrupted the elderly quartermaster in fatherly style.

"Yes, yes, Mulqueen," he said. "I'm sure West Dartvale will wish to hear it from your own lips—which brings us to Miss Laird's mission on board."

Don looked at the skipper with alert suspicion.

"Her home town wishes to honor its name-ship and her crew," the Old Man said urbanely. "You, Mr. Bartlett, with Quartermaster Mulqueen, will take a train early tomorrow morning to West Dartvale. You will receive a certain plaque at a public meeting tomorrow night in the Town Hall."

The thought of such a thing turned Don Bartlett and all his New England forebears cold. A public meeting! On a platform! Icy sweat gathered on his forehead. It wasn't modesty, it was fear, plain fear; he couldn't take it; he wouldn't be able to talk. He'd fall over his feet.

"Sir," said Don Bartlett, "may—"

"That is all, Mr. Bartlett." The Old Man meant it.

Quartermaster Mulqueen swung his gaunt six feet upon Elspeth Laird. He



looked as if he were about to pick her up in one hand. "Maybe the lady'd like to see again the ship she christened," he said. "I can show her the marks o' that shellacking we took, and—"

"By all means," the Old Man assented. "Quartermaster, show Miss Laird the ship."

All agrin. Mulqueen opened the door. Elspeth smiled brilliantly at the shipmaster and at Mulqueen and stepped lithely over the weather-board.

"Sir—" began Don Bartlett wildly, as the door closed.

The Old Man, muttering strong words, wheeled on him.

"Mr. Bartlett," he said with savage politeness, "I have wondered what third mates were for—now I know! You will take that prattling blasted old sea-lawyer Mulqueen up to West Dartvale. You will keep him clean and sober. You will let them adorn Mulqueen with plaques and medals to their heart's content and yourself, as well. . . . Silence, sir!" His glare was venomous. "You will then return to this ship. But if you bring back with you that nosy old poll parrot, you'll never reach this end of the gangplank!"

"But what—"

"Shove him in front of a train. Give him a bottle. Let them gild him and stick him in front of the West Dartvale town hall—or anything! I've suffered that chattering lubber on my

bridge too long! And now he prattles to the newspapers about our strafing, and—"

The Old Man stopped glaring, to turn icy. "Mr. Bartlett," he said, "I perceive that you are about to make an observation. My advice to you, sir, is that you do not. That will be all, Mr. Bartlett. *All!*"

"Yes, sir," said Don Bartlett. He walked out. Alone on the lower bridge, he leaned moodily on the rail. The East River was full of ice, and so were his feet. He cursed out the Old Man with a vigor all the more passionate because it was silent. The Old Man was fast with the gray matter! You can't fire a hero like Mulqueen; but if the hero is lost somewhere two hundred miles inland at sailing-time, it is all right to sail without him. And that meant to the Old Man that he could enter his own wheelhouse again without having the helmsman reminisce about the time he and the third mate saved the ship from a torpedo-hit—"While you, sir, were out cold from a chunk of bomb and the other officers were fighting incendiaries aft."

DON BARTLETT saw the Old Man's point. Mulqueen was a pest. It was a compliment to be trusted to beach him. But when you've been through a tough jam with a guy and he's stood up to it you can't help a sneaking liking—Bucking the Old Man couldn't be done, however—not by a third mate. And Mulqueen *had* asked for it—twenty times.

A 1943 comedy by Richard Howells Watkins



"You'll slip!" Don roared.
"Stop!" She didn't stop.
... She hung on valiantly.

"Will you have to break a date with your girl friend?"

Don Bartlett started. He was being addressed by Miss Elspeth Laird, sponsor of his ship and doubtless his chief tormentor in West Dartvale.

"Look, Miss Laird," Don Bartlett said, "that girl I happened to be escorting at the launching when the Old—the Captain—asked me to show you around was merely a friend. I—"

"A friend!" said Elspeth. "I thought she was a lioness! Goodness knows I didn't want to steal you from her, but—" She giggled. Yes, *giggled* was the word.

"I—"
"There must be something about you not immediately apparent to the casual observer," Elspeth said, looking at him with wide eyes.

"I haven't seen—"
"Anyhow, the train goes at 7:28 A.M., tomorrow morning—at Grand Central. See you on board."

She nodded and descended the steep ladder to the well deck with all the nimbleness of the seagoing.

"Get off the bridge!" Don Bartlett said violently to Mulqueen. The old quartermaster had approached noiselessly for a little chat, showing his scarcity of teeth in a broad smile.

Elspeth heard; her head turned and lifted in scorn at such treatment of a hero; her eyes flashed at Don like a Morse lamp. Then she was gone.

Mulqueen's mouth opened wide. He walked over and looked at the spot on the well deck where Elspeth had been. He looked at Don. He wagged his head knowingly; he smiled soppily.

"Ye seemed interested in the young lady, sir," he said.

"I'm interested in seeing you—uh—overhaul that flag locker."

Mulqueen sighed gustily. "I was young meself, once," he said. He crinkled up the remains of an unpleasant face in a roguish smile.

ANOTHER cold wind that did not come from the river chilled Don Bartlett's spine. "I want you to keep your mouth—and your feet—out of my affairs, Mulqueen," he said. "If you don't—"

There was no threat broad, deep and malevolent enough to cover the situation. Mulqueen cackled. . . .

Don Bartlett attended a hundred public meetings before the wintry red dawn came, and he made a fool of himself at every one. He herded Mulqueen to the train early and holed in, in the smoker. Mulqueen was sober, loquacious and restless. He recked of toilet-water. He kept looking out the window for Elspeth Laird: when he saw her he broke for the platform. Don followed slowly.

They were polite.

"Come and sit with me, Quartermaster Mulqueen," the girl said. "I do want to hear about your exploits—from your own lips."

"Try not to!" muttered Don.

She heard. It didn't help. He had intended to be polite this morning, but the ordeal ahead of him had hot hooks in him.

Mulqueen was opening up the matter of his heroism as they left Don. He returned sulkily to the smoker. A nice girl should have more sense than

to sit with an old sea rat like Mulqueen. She wasn't good-looking. Just perky. She had no right to act as if she were a knockout.

An hour after the train had run through the gray slush of New York into the white snow of the countryside, Mulqueen showed up.

"Never say I didn't give you a break, sir," he said. "D'ye see this?"

He laid a leathery finger on a scar on the side of his head and grinned down at Don.

"I told her ye did it yourself—laid me open to the bone with a belaying-pin, sir," he said.

"You told her—what?"

"They like 'em rough, sir," Mulqueen said with an elaborate wink.

"A saint ashore but devil a saint afloat—that's Third Officer Donald Bartlett, miss," I told her. 'He's not the panty-waist he looks, not by thirty fathom, two hitches and a round turn.' She swallowed it whole. Ye can count on me, sir."

He moved as Don started to his feet.

Don did not pursue him. "What do I care what she thinks of me?" he asked himself. Feverishly he began to rehearse his speech. Thirty-five words, but he couldn't bring himself to remember ten of them.

Hours later, when they changed, he felt it necessary to join the girl while they waited for the branch-line train to pull in. Elspeth was monosyllabic. Don collapsed into silence; Mulqueen, he realized, had vanished.

"I have a request to make, Mr. Bartlett," the girl said suddenly. "I'd appreciate it if you do not have my picture—the one taken at the launching—pasted on the bulkhead in your room."

"Your picture on—" He stopped.

"People might think I was a friend and I don't rate being the friend of such a—a formidable person."

She was thinking of Mulqueen's scar. For the first time in Don's life he had too many things to say all at one time. He could tumble her off her high horse by coldly stating the truth—that her picture did not adorn his bulkhead. But he didn't.

"Next time I'll knock his head off, instead of just denting it!" he blurted out savagely. He was referring to Mulqueen, that lying, leather-faced Cupid with size twelve feet. He nested his right fist spasmodically in his left hand so that he would not brandish it in midair.

"Oh! Then you did hit—" She drew away from him.

He looked around for Mulqueen. The quartermaster was still absent. Well, if he had to comb the taverns of this town for Mulqueen and missed the connection, no one could say he had not tried to bring him to that infernal meeting. He took a step toward the street; but just then Mulqueen came around the corner of a baggage-truck. Inexorably the branch line train pulled into the station.

Singly they climbed aboard. Again Mulqueen followed her into the coach, while Don Bartlett sought the smoker. This time Don sat well forward, where he could keep an eye on Mulqueen in the car ahead.

They ran deep among hills that were surely big enough to be called mountains, hills dark with the unchanging greenery of pines set dramatically against the snow. And then they strained and pulled in among even higher hills, some bare, windswept and polar, with a kinship, hard to define, with gray wintry seas, breaking

into whiteness. But it was a static, unpleasing kinship. Confound that girl!

At every reluctant turn of the wheels, Don Bartlett's speech leaked more easily from his perforated brain.

BEFORE half of the distance to West Dartvale was covered, Mulqueen got up from his seat and walked aft. He paused on the cold platform of the coach, out of sight. Don slid out of his seat and made for him. Before he got the door open Mulqueen was making holiday with a pint bottle.

"Not till after tonight, Mulqueen," Don said brusquely. "Stow that bottle!"

"There's a reception-committee meetin' the train, sir," Mulqueen said. "I want to be at me best."

"Stow it!"

"Just a drop in m' stomach to keep out the cold, sir," Mulqueen said, and in defiance of the order tilted it again.

Don grabbed for the bottle and got one hand on it. But Mulqueen had two massive hands in play. Don wrapped himself around the bottle and wrenched hard, with all the strength in his wiry body. A lurch of the train added unexpected momentum as Mulqueen was separated from the bottle. The big quartermaster went flying backward across the platform, cracked his head against the stout glass of the door, and sagged

to the steel floor. He sat there blinking.

Breathing hard, Don jettisoned the bottle between the cars. As he tried to lift Mulqueen to his feet, Elspeth came out.

"Oh," she cried, "I thought I saw— You've hurt him!"

"'Twas fair-enough, miss," Mulqueen said slowly. "Just a bit of a—"

The girl faced Don Bartlett, her face aflame with anger. "You said you'd get him, and you have!" she cried. "I won't allow my town to honor a man like you! I'm going to telephone ahead to the committee!"

She turned and darted back through the door. Don watched her hurry forward. She met the conductor and spoke swiftly to him. The aged functionary shook his head in ponderous negation. She stamped her foot and ran past him.

A few seconds later the air-brakes hissed. The train, climbing a grade at no great speed, ground to a halt. The conductor hurried forward.

"She's pulled the air, sir," said Mulqueen apologetically.

"Shut your blasted head!" Don rasped at him.

He hurried forward, but he couldn't find her. He saw no open car doors. He peered outside. The train had stopped in a high saddle between a couple of bleak-looking mountains. There was a sort of hut of rude logs, up a hundred feet on the eastern slope, and that was all. It was as desolate a spot as ever Don Bartlett, a coast-town boy, had seen. He walked back through the train, looking fruitlessly at the female passengers, until he reached the rear platform.

THE train got under way again. And then Don saw her: She was hiding from the train crew behind a snow-topped pile of ties.

"The little sap!" he growled. He wrenched open the door, faced forward and jumped. He landed hard, despite the snow. When he got up the girl had come from behind the ties to stare at him. He started limping back to her. She stood still.

The train continued on its way; apparently his plunge was unnoticed.

"What did you do that for?" she demanded.

"I wanted to be sure you had a nickel to telephone your committee,"



A lurch of the train added momentum as Mulqueen was separated from the bottle.

*That was Mulqueen
up there on the plat-
form, in full cry.
And was he heroic!*

he said. He darted a belittling glance at the forest primeval. "Is there a drugstore around here?"

She started up through the deep snow toward the hut. "There's a phone in the ski lodge," she said with dignity. "Do you think I'm a fool?"

"Of course," Don said. He looked around at the dark woods as he floundered along beside her. "I hope you can raise that committee before the Indians get here."

Politely he reached for the door-handle of the hut. He turned it and pulled, without result. He looked questioningly at the girl.

"Why, it's always open!" she said. "Of course"—her voice faltered—"I've had a job in New York since September. They may have—"

He cupped his hands against a wind-
dowpane and stared into the interior.

"The telephone's gone to the war," he reported. "Pulled out by the roots. No skiers. Probably shooting craps in Morocco. Just dust."

He pushed his hands deep in his pockets, hunched his shoulders a bit against a breath of air from the slope above the hut and looked at her inquiringly.

Unexpectedly, however, she laughed. "It doesn't matter—the telephone, I mean," she said. "I've succeeded in eliminating you from the meeting tonight. There's no way of getting to town if the skiing slopes aren't being used. No buses, no taxis, no trains."

"I wish you'd eliminated Mulqueen, too," he said. "If he gets to a bottle before I get to him, your meeting and my job are both adrift."

"Is he a drinking man?"

"Nothing but liquids."

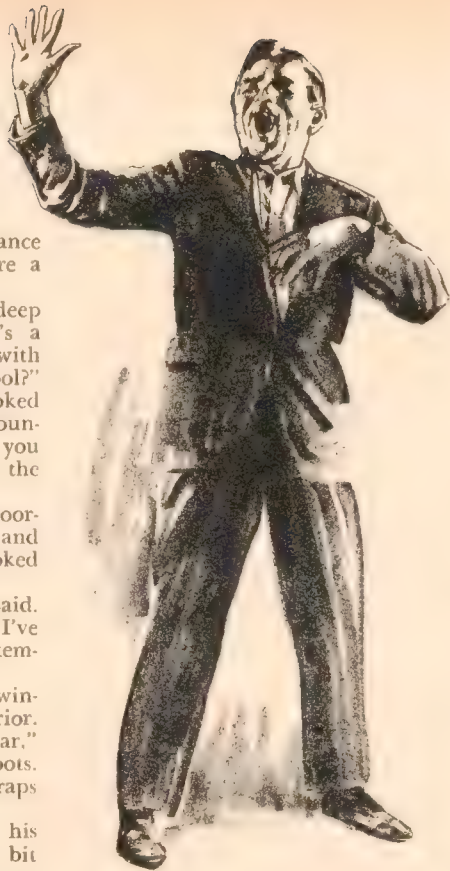
Again he looked around. Once you got off the moving train this place was not like the sea, where no towering grayback was like the next. Nothing changed, no matter how long you looked at it, unless—Of course the sunlight on the slope above had retreated slightly higher.

"I hope there are enough robins around here to cover me with leaves," he said.

Her face had become grave. A little shiver swept over her. "The woods road will be deep in snow."

He appraised the hut. "Man-slaughter's my specialty, as you know," he said, "but I'm a good enough burglar to kick in a pane of glass."

She avoided his eyes.



"No!" she said. A new tensi-
ty was in her voice. "Please—let me think."

"I'm in favor of it," he said.

It was becoming plainer to him with every passing minute that his berth depended upon catching up with and smacking down Mulqueen in a hurry. What Mulqueen could do to himself and the good name of the merchant service—

SHE reached her decision swiftly. "The going will be easiest along the railroad," she said. "We must follow the tracks up over this notch and down the other side till they cross the State road. We can flag a car."

She looked up at the rosy pink on the slope high above. "Only we must hurry," she said. "It will be dark long before we reach the road."

They plowed on down to the tracks again and started plodding along the rails. The ties had not been swept bare of snow and the spaces in between made constant traps for their feet.

"Ships are better to go places in than shoes," he said after a while.

"You're still limping," she said.

"Comes of kicking Mulqueen too hard," he said, looking sideways at

her. "I must be gentler with the man."

"That isn't funny!" she said. "I don't understand why you should abuse and torment that poor fellow."

HE snorted. "It's my disposition," he said. "Leave it at that."

They walked on, staring downward at the dirty snow.

"What is your explanation?" she asked.

"I'm jealous," he said. "He seems to have a way with girls."

"He shines only by comparison," she said. "What do you think he will do in West Dartvale?"

"Ask Dante, the big imagination man," Don said gloomily.

They slogged on up the slow grade—up, up—stumbling and slipping at increasing intervals. All at once she stopped, listening.

"Train coming."

"Maybe I can flag it," he said. "The engineer will know we aren't doing this for fun."

They waited. The train came on, sluggish on the grade. It was a freight train, a long one.

"He'll slide right back to tidewater if he does stop," Don said. Standing between the rails, he pulled off his dark blue overcoat. Even in the increasing dusk it stood out against the surrounding snow like a red flag.

The train kept coming, blowing live coals out of its stack in its excess exertions. Don Bartlett waved.

"Get off the track," he said to her over his shoulder. "I have an idea this bird is too smart to stop."

She didn't move.

The train whistled. Ferocious, it sounded. Its driving wheels were churning with furious effort.

"Off!" cried Don. He pushed her, and together they leaped off at the side of the track. The locomotive lumbered past. The grimy fireman stuck his head out and brandished a lump of coal threateningly.

Freight cars began to go past with the terrific racket that freight cars always make. Don climbed into his coat and watched gloomily.

Elsbeth plucked at his sleeve. "Let's hop it!"

She darted up out of the ditch. Running along the narrow, snowy way between the banging cars and the sloping edge, she tried to match the train's pace.

"You'll slip!" Don roared, jumping into pursuit. "Stop!"

She didn't stop; she did her utmost on that bad going, but compared to her, the train was moving fast. An iron ladder at the end of a car came rushing toward her. She grabbed at a rung. The train jerked her off the snow; her slim body swung out like a flag in a breeze.



Elspeth plunged into a snowdrift. Don's technique was worse than hers.

Don gasped. But she hung on valiantly; she swung herself back and got a foot in the iron step below the body of the car.

He jumped for the next hand-grip that flitted toward him. The iron bar wrenched at his hands with painful vigor. Next instant he too was acquiring the momentum of the train. His arm-bones were fairly cracking and straining out of their sockets. He withstood the jolt, as she had, and he clambered up the ladder onto the top of the jiggling freight car. He ran at furious speed along the swaying roof, then down the forward ladder onto mounds of coal in a gondola car. He floundered to the forward end in time to help Elspeth up the other end onto the coal.

Safe on the coal, he didn't release his clutch on her shoulders. He shook her hard. "You little— What's the idea, risking your life like that?"

"M-more violence?" she gasped.

He released her. "Look!" he roared above the clatter of the wheels. "A belaying-pin is a device for making fast the halliards and sheets on sailing craft. Mulqueen does need one smacked against his skull, often enough! But I haven't seen a belaying-pin since I left my training-ship."

He indicated himself with an angry whack on his chest.

"I'm a bunco mate, not a bucko mate; I know it! Understand? But

for Pete's sake don't rub it in by thinking I'm a tough mug. The reason I ducked away from you on launching-day was that that babbling brook who presided over the ceremonies announced that he was going to ask for a few words from some noble young officer assigned to the ship. I saw the Old Man and the mate whispering together and looking at me. Of course I ducked; I couldn't take it. They got the second mate."

HE sat on the coal and drew his coat around him in forlorn resignation. "That's all. Now for Pete's sake and if you're fond of Mulqueen, stop talking to me. I've got to learn my speech well enough to pull me, and Mulqueen besides, out of this hole—I mean, this meeting—tonight."

She regarded him in silence. It was a bright, interested gaze not helpful to memorizing words.

He muttered what he could remember of the speech to himself. The train rocked and thundered and the wind cut across their faces like springing saplings.

"I wouldn't work *too* hard," Elspeth said, after watching his efforts for a minute or two. "You aren't going to be there in time to make any speeches."

"Why not?"

"This is a freight train. It isn't going to West Dartvale. It will take the cut-off and go way past—"

"What!"

"We've walking and thumbing to do—plenty of it—before we get back to our town. Please may I have a cigarette, too?"

"Sorry," he said. "You knocked the manners right out of me. I guess this will be the end of Mulqueen."

"Why?"

He was silent. The Old Man's explosive order of exile for Mulqueen was ship's business. At last he said: "Binges of the Mulqueen intensity are banned—especially on good-will missions."

She nodded. For a while they rode the coal in thundering silence. He threw a lump of coal at a telegraph pole. She crinkled her brow abruptly. She thought.

"There's one chance of getting there almost in time," she said.

"What's the chance?" he asked.

"Tell you later." She looked out at the snow-ridged trees flickering past. They were going downgrade, now, at a tremendous pace. The cut through the mountains was behind them. The train pounded on to more level going through a thickly wooded valley. The valley was interminable. Then it was gone, and the locomotive was puffily attacking another grade. A road led toward the tracks from across an iron bridge.

"Now!" Elspeth cried. She eluded his lunge to grab her, and ran over the coal to the end of the gondola. Next instant she was slipping over the edge and down onto the iron ladder.

"Don't—" he croaked.

With feet swinging ahead of her body, she launched herself from the ladder. She landed and for a moment her running legs kept up with her flying body. Then snow clutched at her feet and she plunged face-first into what was left of a snowdrift.

Don's technique was worse than hers. He alighted but briefly on his feet. The train's gait made him a tumbling mass, rolling onward head over heels. He hit bottom in so many places that none took too much of a jolt.

He pelted back to her. She was just lifting her crust-scratched face from the snow. He picked her up. She seemed to be all right, but she shrank away from him.

"No violence—if it kills me," he promised. He dried and patted her red face with his handkerchief. "Not even a shake. But why—"

"The road," she said. "This way we'll get into town in time to save Mulqueen."

He did what he could about Mulqueen with words of fire and flame.

"The Old Man was right!" he shouted. "That trouble-making old lug deserves to be ditched up here in the sticks. Come on! I'll go through with this meeting somehow myself and Mulqueen can keep on to blazes in his own way!"

"Afraid of making that speech?"

"Yes!" he said. "Now you know! But I'll make it! Which—"

She pointed down the road at an approaching truck. They flagged it, with gestures and emotion too vivid to be ignored. And it was going to West Dartvale, though slowly.

"Poor Mulqueen," she said once on that cold ride.

"Poor Satan!" he said with such vigor that the driver moved his hand uneasily toward a jack-handle.

IN West Dartvale, a town of no great social significance, she piloted him to the town hall, a dead white building of no great architectural merit. Their feet were wooden with cold and they agreed that their faces were frosted off.

"Never mind fussing with your hair," he said. "You look like a white alley cat that's wintered in a coal-bin. Move!"

"Y-you are a bucko mate!" she chattered.

"My mind's as empty as my stomach, but I'll tell 'em something," he said as he burst through the door. A warm blast of humanity greeted them.

"Sh!" whispered a fat man, lying in wait on the other side of the door. His face was reproving, then startled as he took in their appearance. "You're interrupting our guest, Third Officer Bartlett."

Don Bartlett stood dead still. Third Officer Bartlett? "Him?" he said, pointing toward the platform with complete lack of refinement. "Him! Third Officer—"

"Yes! Sh!"

That was Mulqueen up there on the platform, Quartermaster Mulqueen, in full cry. Not— And then, while the girl beside him made a little choking sound, he realized that Third Officer Bartlett and Quartermaster Mulqueen were both up there on the platform, though in the physical form of Mulqueen alone.

For Mulqueen, in the midst of dive-bombers and torpedo planes, submarines and fighters, was standing the bridge watch on the *West Dartvale*. And he was standing the wheel trick simultaneously. Though the Old Man, graphically described, lay unconscious at his feet, there was more than a touch of the Old Man too about Mulqueen, bellowing his orders. In fact, in spite of bellowing plenty of orders to the crew, by his telling, he was practically alone in the ship. Most of the time Mulqueen was Third Officer Bartlett, in name and in presence. And was he heroic!

Don Bartlett stared fiercely at the aisles, jammed with standees fit to make a fireman faint; then he turned and bolted out the door, with Elspeth after him like the tail of a kite.

"What are you going to do?" she cried.

"There must be some door leading to the platform," he flung at her over his shoulder as he rushed down the side of the white building. "I'm going to get in!"

"Wait! Think!" the girl said. "I thought you were afraid of speaking to an audience—"

He tightened up his fists. "This isn't going to be speaking."

"Before all those people!"

"They can close their eyes!" Don said, thrusting on toward a likely door,—"while I'm closing his!"

She increased her speed and flung herself in front of him.

"I won't let you!" she said. "He's doing a job—beautiful job—much better than you could! He has the whole house hanging on what he says. Let him alone!"

She was clinging to him like a limpet, and suddenly they both realized that. Next instant she was struggling away from him and he was not cooperating at all.

"No!" he said. "I'm not going to let you go until I show you what a liar Mulqueen's been right along. Look here!"

He shifted his right arm to her waist, imprisoning her securely, while he reached in his breast pocket for his wallet.

"Your picture never was on the bulkhead in my room," he said. Keeping her in the ring of his arms he pulled out a folded news-clipping. "It's here—a lot closer to my heart."

She stared at it.

"And—you aren't going—in there? For me?"

He kissed her cold lips. "For you," he said.

"B-best cinders I ever tasted," she said.

"Elspeth, sweetheart—" He stopped and stared into her white, pinched face in the chill starlight. "We eat," he said. "Be darned if I make love to a girl who's too frozen to resist."

But she didn't move—not till he had kissed her again, and better.

"WAIT for me here," Don Bartlett said to Elspeth, at the head of the pier, just twenty-four hours later.

He jerked his head at the long gaunt form of Quartermaster Mulqueen, standing by. "And don't let Cupid break for a gimmill."

"What are you going to do, Don?"

"This is between me and the Old man. I'll throw Mulqueen back in his face and tell him to do his own dirty work if he wants to beach him."

"Don't be long," said Elspeth.

"The Old Man's a terror but there are other ships," said Don Bartlett. He swung down the pier with his face all jutting jaw.

The Old Man was paper-juggling at his desk. He frowned at the third mate and looked past him.

"You haven't let Mulqueen get away from you, have you, Mr. Bartlett?" he snapped.

"Uh— What, sir?" said Don Bartlett, off balance.

"They're sending us to—to—on the toughest run, Mr. Bartlett, and I need petty officers with hair on their chests," the Old Man said curtly. "Lots of hair! I'm going to make that—uh—Mulqueen the bo'sun—down on the deck, where he can break in green men instead of wasting his larynx up in the wheelhouse."

His voice grew sharper. "You haven't let him get away from you, have you? Good grief, man, third mates are a dime a dozen, but a good, level-headed, able petty officer— You haven't lost him?"

"No, sir," said Don Bartlett and his chin recovered its prominence. "I brought him back, on my own. Because I'm not a dime a dozen in any man's ship—now."

The Old Man aimed his eyes portentously.

Don Bartlett took the glare and stared back. "Be with me now, Elspeth!" he said to himself.

"Huh!" said the skipper. "Well—perhaps you are right, Bartlett."

The AFFAIR

HERE it is, friends. You may well look hard at it; no outsider, until now, has ever had a peep into the secrets of Quest, Incorporated! Here it is, File R17W, 458B—and not so fat to look at. Yet it's a great thing, for it has to tell of Trigger Hanlon and the Drifting Face.

"Find Dr. Li Yuen Sam," said Reeves, when Hanlon walked into his office.

"Right," agreed Hanlon curtly, interest showing in his dark eyes, set in rugged features.

"Here's all we have to go on." Reeves pushed an envelope across the desk. "You'll have to rush it. The Singapore Express leaves in half an hour. Passage booked; Miss Smith has papers and money ready for you. Can do?"

"Sure," said Hanlon, and walked out with the envelope.

Hanlon, who had been a major in an armored division that fought through North Africa and up through Italy, was the best man in the whole organization. Trigger, they called



of the DRIFTING FACE

him in Army circles, because he never budged until pulled, then went off with a bang.

This was one of his queerest cases. There were some queer ones in all corners of the world; that was why Quest, Incorporated, had become a far-flung network of investigation. The end of the war had left most of this unhappy planet at sixes and sevens. People, even of importance, were gone in all quarters. Never before in history had there been such a file of the missing. They had dropped from sight, in occupied countries, in fighting zones, by sea and land.

Plenty, of course, had gone in deportations and massacres in the countries under Fascist rule. Others were lost trying to escape. Still more were missing, and no one knew how or where; airmen, seamen, millionaires and bums, children, women innumerable, dead or roaming the world afar in the track of armies. Many wanted to remain lost forever; many were hidden.

Following the peace, many government agencies had achieved wonders of repatriation, but thousands remained unreached, their fate never determined; and agonized humanity never ceased its search for loved ones. This was where Quest, Incorporated, came in.

It mushroomed amazingly; almost before anyone knew it, the firm had offices everywhere. It went in for missing property as well as persons; of this, too, was no end. Small people as well as great were handled, as endowments came to be established for charity cases. Schmucker, the Dutch diamond merchant who was located half crazed and wholly crippled in a forgotten Nazi hellhole, started this out of gratitude—not to the firm but to God; and others followed his lead.

Hanlon was operating out of the San Francisco office when this case of the Drifting Face came up. He got across the bay and made the Express Clipper with not two minutes to spare—a comfortable margin, for Hanlon. It was one of the Orient Line ships that took the stratosphere route via Alaska, Kamchatka and the China coast, nonstop to Singapore, less than three days over all—so greatly had the world shrunk by air map.

THE usual crowd was aboard, mostly business men and technicians, a scattering of Chinese and a few women. Hanlon paid no heed to them or to the ship; it was an old story to him. He scarcely looked out when they passed a Java-Austral Line transport that had started ten minutes before them. When the steward had

fixed him up with a table and radio-phone and a drink, he dug into the envelope to examine the case in hand.

But first, he did look at the back of a man up ahead, because the man wore his hat cocked on the left side of his head—an old trick of the Armored Divisions, who took a well-deserved pride in themselves. Deciding the man was a stranger, he shrugged.

"Look him up later; might be some Johnny I've run into," he decided, and fell to work.

Facing him were several photographs of a stoutish, complacent, handsome Straits Chinese, a face hard to mistake and easily tucked into memory—not for the tight lips or ruthless eyes with heavy down-dropping lids, but because of the puckered scar-tissue left by some burn on the left cheek. This was Dr. Li Yuen Sam, a man of fifty, and notorious.

Dr. Li had been a member of Singapore's vast Chinese colony. He floated a patent medicine which made him passing rich, and was a vaguely sinister figure; but of course all police records had been swept away. With the Japanese occupation, Dr. Li had emerged as the evil genius of the new order.

Rich men of his own race were ferreted out and shot; one or two Malay State potentates had died suddenly;



Never before in history has there been such a number of missing people. They have just dropped from sight, in occupied countries, in fighting zones, by sea and land. Hence the extraordinary business of that remarkable Bureau of Missing Persons known as "Quest, Inc." And hence this fascinating story—

by Gordon Keyne

wealth and hidden funds were found and seized. Dr. Li profited. He became a multi-millionaire, a veritable Croesus. When the inevitable happened, he vanished. He was never found, after the bloody recapture of the heap of rubble that had been Singapore.

Certain salient facts were known: He had not left the island with the handful of Japs who escaped. He had been seen alive a day or two before the Marines and Aussies fought their finishing fight with the remaining Japs. His body had not been found. Later, two Chinese who knew him well claimed to have seen him at Malacca, a week afterward. This was all. The envelope contained only a notation to see Parks, the Singapore agent of Quest, Inc.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" Hanlon exclaimed indignantly, and reached for the radio-phone. "Get hold of Reeves, Quest, Incorporated, San Francisco."

He held on: the call came through at once. Reeves was on the line.

"Hanlon speaking. Your information is deficient—"

"Never mind, Trigger," cut in Reeves. "You'll be contacted *en route*. If not, see Parks at Singapore."

"Okay. But the Chinese want this guy worse'n we do. How can we be expected to win where they've failed?"

"They're Chinese. We're Quest, Incorporated," said Reeves, and hung up.

Hanlon cursed softly.

"Hml This is cockeyed," he reflected. "Are we working for someone who wants to bump off this Dr. Li, or to save him from getting bumped? The San Francisco office, not Parks, took on the job. And why was I bundled off in such a condemned rush to make this ship?"

HE was still fuming over these queries when the man up front rose and came aft, still with his hat cocked on the left side. He looked at Hanlon and grinned.

"Major Hanlon? Otherwise, Trigger Hanlon? Saw you come aboard. So you don't remember me—Hilary, senior surgeon of the old outfit at Camp Young, back in '43. I was transferred about the time the Sixth went overseas—"

"For Pete's sake! Bob Hilary!" exclaimed Hanlon. "Sit down, you old so-and-so—tickled pink to see you again! Still wearing the old trademark, too."

Hilary shook his head. "Thanks; can't sit down. I'm airsick as hell. Going to bed and stay there. I may get pulled off at Dutch Harbor; if not, see you later. I hope to go through. They say we may drop down to give us a close view of Japan. I'd counted on a look at the earthquake ruins."

"I doubt if we will," said Hanlon. "Only the slow ships cater to tourists. Nothing much to see, anyhow. The Nips have been paralyzed ever since half their islands sank under the water. They've not done much rebuilding; haven't more than cleared up the mess, most places."

The other leaned over. "Look, there's a girl wants to meet you. I was talking with her when you came aboard. Says she has heard of you. Won't let me bring you up there but wants to come back here. D'you mind?"

"Yes," snapped Hanlon. "I'm not playing squire to any dame."

"Nope. This is a lady, a Chinese lady—a Miss Li. She seems to be somebody."

Hanlon blinked twice. "Okay, fetch her along," he said.

Reeves had said he would be contacted *en route*. Miss Li? The name meant nothing; it was one of the most common Chinese names. Still, this must be the contact. It was odd that she would want to be presented to him. This Hilary affair—why, it was all a plant, of course! It was deliberate and purposeful. Why? Why this screwy approach? Or was it just cautious?

He rose as Hilary returned with a companion, and acknowledged the introduction. Would she sit down? She would, and did, like a flower-petal settling to earth.

She was small and delicate, not beautiful. Unsmiling, with that air of ancient culture and aristocracy possessed by so many Chinese of old lineage: a perfect and exquisite poise. Hanlon faced her across the table. Bob Hilary disappeared.

"May I inquire," Hanlon asked abruptly, "why you want to speak with me?"

"The question is not necessary," she replied in perfect English, "because the fact will become apparent. I wish to show you something."

No beating about the bush, thought Hanlon approvingly. She opened her handbag, and from it took a little roll of soft-fibered Chinese paper, which she passed to him. He unrolled and laid it on the table; then he sat with eyes gripped to it, startled.

Here was a picture done with sparse lines but with a great feeling of motion, as the Chinese can effect with a few brush-strokes. A landscape of sea and mountains was suggested, rather than drawn; and above this, drifting in the air, floating on the wind, was a head and face. Hanlon recognized it instantly; and every sense, every faculty in him, leaped alert.

It was the face of Dr. Li Yuen Sam. "Well?" He gave her a sudden sharp look.

She remained quite placid.

"This picture and others like it," she said, appearing faintly amused by the air of Hanlon, "originate somewhere in Malaya. Probably near Singora, because they come from there by mail. That's beyond Penang, you know. That's why we've engaged you to find Dr. Li."

"We?" Hanlon repeated.

"Dr. Li is our father. My sister and I alone remain of the family. These pictures have come to us as a token that he is alive; just the pictures, no message. The face is not as we knew it, for it has aged and changed. He has suffered."

"This is a queer thing," Hanlon murmured. "You engaged Quest, Incorporated? Why?"

"It was I, yes. We cannot search for him; there are too many who hate him, who would take his life. He is alive, but cannot come to us. We do not understand it, of course. But one thing is certain: he himself painted these pictures. He was highly talented with the brush. And in all of them the face is drifting, like this one. Perhaps it means nothing at all."

SHE explained that her sister, in Singapore, had approached the Quest agent there: Parks had referred them to San Francisco. She was there at college, and had handled it. Dr. Li, she pursued patiently, was held in vindictive hatred by Chinese and Malays alike, with perfect justice. Even she professed no affection whatever for him.

"But," she concluded, "we are his daughters. We owe him parental duty; we must find him."

"If he could mail you these pictures, why couldn't he write you?" Hanlon asked.

"I do not think he mailed them. I think he is held a prisoner somewhere, and these are sent by his captors. Possibly he is being slowly tortured to death. We know nothing. We will give you any possible help at Singapore. All the pictures show the drifting face, but no two have the same landscape. There may be a reason; I cannot say. Here are photographic copies of the others. Thank you so much. Good-by."

She left him, perfectly poised and serene, no aloof; she made it clear that she had no intention of enlarging on the acquaintance.

Hanlon glanced at the photographs she laid down, then tucked them all away until the morrow. He wanted to sleep on the thing. Nor did Bob Hilary come near him again.

He did not gather in the main cabin with the other passengers for television news or for movies. He did not even stay awake to watch the helicopter awaiting them above Dutch Harbor come aboard to refuel the

"Had I known you were here, we would have waited before making repairs to the bridge," the young Malay exclaimed.



tanks. With morning he learned that Hilary had indeed departed there.

Later in the day, a second refueling took place above Yamagata, in that portion of the central island which had escaped the frightful earthquakes and engulfings during the war, and was still occupied by the Russian-

Chinese reconstruction forces. Then, with full tanks, the Clipper headed for Singapore, and Hanlon settled down to his work.

He made a minute study of each picture. The face was the same in all six, the same sense of motion was in them all; the landscapes differed.

Two showed only sea, three showed mountains, one what might have been city roofs. In each picture was the effect of blowing wind on which the face drifted. No mistaking that face with its scar tissue, the eyes wide and looking at the beholder. There was no signature or writing of any sort.

If these pictures had indeed been made by Dr. Li, with their eerie suggestion of blowing motion—then why? Not for fun, assuredly, but to convey a message. In his work for Quest, Incorporated, Hanlon had frequently been impressed with the value of intuition; not that intuition would find anyone, but it would often give a clue of direct aid. "I think he is held a prisoner and these are sent by his captors," Miss Li had said.

"That's logical. It makes sense," reflected Hanlon. "Adopting it as a base for deduction, what then? He's obviously a man to hold out against direct torture. Suppose his ill-gotten wealth is securely hidden and his captors want it. He might give up a part of it now and then in exchange for getting a picture sent his daughters—the only living creatures who give a damn about him. Then the pictures must hold a message. His captors missed it, naturally. Those two dumb Chinese gals have missed it. It had to be hidden. Is it the fact of the face drifting? No. That's too obvious. That's camouflage. Let's look farther; remember, he's an artist."

WITH a magnifying glass from his kit-bag, he began to study the pictures anew. He rejected the landscapes as being too obvious, also. He looked for hidden Chinese ideographs and found none. The more he studied, the less luck he had. Yet there was a faint something that differed in the faces, which were apparently all alike. A slight change of expression. What produced it? Line by line he worked and found nothing. . . . Ah! The scar, the most prominent feature of the face!

Here he discerned a slight variation in the brushwork. The scar was indicated by short straight lines; three such lines suggested a shadow, heightening the effect. In three of the pictures these lines, one above another, consisted of two unbroken below the top one, which was broken midway. In the other pictures the top line was unbroken, the two lower ones were broken in the center. Was this accident?

Taking pencil and paper he drew three equal lines, the top one broken; three more, with the two lower ones broken. He rose, went forward and located Miss Li. She was reading the big anniversary number of the Singapore *Times*, with its photographs of the magnificent new buildings so rapidly replacing the older destroyed city. She laid it aside and made room for him.

"Sit down, please. You have discovered something?"

"I don't know," Hanlon handed her the paper. "Do these sets of lines mean anything?"

She looked at them. Her eyes struck up at him without apparent surprise.

"Oh, yes! These are two of the eight trigrams. They are found in the I-Ching, an ancient book of divination. Each trigram represents some attribute of nature. This," she said, touching the first, "with a broken line over two unbroken, stands for *Water*—not running water like rain, but standing water like a marsh or lake. *Tui* is the name. The undivided line is the Yang or positive or male, and the divided line is the Yin or negative or female. This other trigram represents *Ken*, or mountains."

"Very instructive," murmured Hanlon. "Would Dr. Li have known it?"

"Certainly; he was a student of the trigrams and the sixty-four hexagrams formed from them. Why?"

He told her how and where he had come upon them. She listened attentively but without apparent surprise, then shook her head.

"I don't know what they could mean. We might ask some student of the I-Ching. Or there may be others hidden in the pictures."

"No others. All right; you've told me what I wanted to know. Let it wait till we get in touch with your sister at Singapore. You might call her on the radio-phone and have her meet the bus when it gets in. Time may be valuable on this job."

He went back to his own seat, studied the pictures anew, and found nothing else. But the two trigrams, now he knew what they were, stood out strongly.

Later, he called Parks.

"This is Hanlon. Do you know of a place up the peninsula called Singora?"

"Sure. Marco Polo was there and wrote about it."

"Hang Marco Polo! Where is it?"

"Northeast of Kedah," said Parks. "East side of the peninsula. Used to be in the tip of Siam that reached down there, pre-war. Now it's included in the Malay Federation with everything up to and beyond the Kra Canal—that's the canal that the Japs pushed through when they held the country."

"How do I get up there from your village?"

"Railroad isn't finished. Motor road is; or take a plane. Advise you to motor."

"Any mountains close to Singora?"

"Lord, no! Some hills south of it, though."

"Huh! All right. Have a car, a fast one, and a driver; no Malay or Chinese, either. And are these Li gals okay or phony?"

"Strictly okay, Trigger, and the sky's the limit. When d'you want the car?"

"A couple hours after we get in. Have it ready, and you'll hear from me."

"Right. Don't do any talking over the air about this case, though. So long." And Parks rang off. . . .

That evening Hanlon got into a bridge game with two World Refinance officials from Washington and a Dutchman bound for Java. It broke up at midnight, with Hanlon and the Dutchman each five dollars loser—which, at ten cents a point, meant very good bridge. Then he turned in, while with all eight quiet engines sweeping her on, the giant Clipper held on her last leg of the course.

He was not interested in Miss Li or her sister, particularly after his last talk with her, though it would be just as well to meet the sister and see what she knew. He had decided that Chinese are not the subtly omniscient people they were cracked up to be. He had retained all six of the pictures, the original and the five photographs.

Late morning saw them edging down. At five thousand feet the steward flung open the windows to let in the good sea air, and Singapore lay far-stretched beneath. They circled to await landing permission, giving everyone ample opportunity to gaze upon that rebuilt city of destiny—the magnificent north road and causeway, the United Nations naval and air base south of the strait on Batam Island, and the lordly new city itself, twice the size of the old Singapore, with its famous Memorial reaching gaunt arms into the sky. They skirted the freight airdrome, heading for the Clipper terminus beyond.

Even Hanlon, on this slow descent, was forced to marvel at the system of airfields and controls; the whole sky seemed alive with planes, all perfectly handled. Not only was this the tourist and passenger crossroads of the East, but the burden of freight traffic centering here was enormous. The system of stationary balloons and helicopter police marking the lanes and preventing accidents was ingenious in the extreme.

THEN it was all past; they were down and heading into the correct slip. There were no formalities; these had been seen to at San Francisco. A mere check-off by officials, and the passengers were free to stream ashore. Hanlon found Miss Li, added her bag to his own kit, and they passed out to the slip. They were met by a woman, older, bonier, but of the same marvelous graceful composure—Miss Li's sister, who had a car at hand, an antique pre-war Ford.

The luggage was piled in by attendants, and they were off, reaching a delightful bungalow in the new Kum Kiat Road. Practically every

vestige of the former Singapore had been destroyed in the final siege, but Hanlon was not here for sightseeing. He got straight down to business as soon as the elder sister had been apprised of his discovery of the trigrams.

"Time is short, ladies," he said bluntly. "What do you think about these trigrams?"

They did not know. They went into a dissertation on the esoteric meanings of the figures, which he brushed aside. To his annoyance, he found them helpless, very charming, but quite impractical when it came to assisting him. Like so many survivors of the frightful war scenes, they seemed numbed, unable to use their wits. But Hanlon enjoyed an excellent luncheon, kept his own conclusions to himself, and elicited quite a bit of information.

During the Jap occupation, Dr. Li Yuen Sam had been a busy man. Singapore had been crammed with treasure; the rulers of the Malay peninsula had fled there for refuge or had sent in their wealth—and everything was nipped by the Jap advance. Dr. Li, in his rôle of Judas, had amassed wealth beyond compute; and lest the Japs take it from him, had hidden it by the only means possible—burial. He must have left buried loot all over the island and up the peninsula, in those days.

The two daughters were quite frank about it. They even had a snapshot taken during the occupation, showing the execution of the

Hanlon froze in comprehension. . . There, sure enough, was Dr. Li Yuen Sam.

Sultan of Patani, one of Dr. Li's victims. The sultan had brought his whole establishment to Singapore; he and his wives and children and treasures had been bagged by the Japs. One son, then away at school in England, had survived.

"Well, I'll communicate with you ladies later," Hanlon glanced at his watch. "I must get over to the Quest office."

They drove him downtown; charming, serene, deft—and dumb, he told himself. Quest, Inc., had its own building, and they dropped him there. He shook hands, took his kit-bag, and strode into the building. Two minutes later he walked into Parks' office.

Parks was a saturnine, efficient New Zealander. Hanlon wasted no time on preliminaries but asked about the ordered car.

"It's waiting," said Parks, "with Jem Bentinck for driver. He's one of my best men, an Aussie who spent most of his life up in the rubber country and knows the place like a book. He's fully acquainted with the case, such as it is. Have you struck any leads?"

"Don't know yet. Why hand over your best man to me?"

"Because there's half a million dollars coming to the firm if we locate our man. I wouldn't touch it even at that figure, but your office did."

Hanlon whistled softly. "Half a million? From those two gals?"

"You bet. They're not impoverished; it's a matter of conscience with 'em. And if you do find Dr. Li, look out! His life won't be worth a farthing, or yours either."

BENTINCK walked in—a small, twinkling-eyed chap. Hanlon shook hands and asked one question.

"How long will it take us to get up to Singora?"

"Better make it Patani, south of there," said Bentinck. "Singora was badly mauled by the Japs; it's mostly

ruins. Patani? Oh, by tomorrow night, if we get away soon."

"Let's get away right now."

They departed with a saturnine blessing from Parks.

The car was at the curb—one of the new transparent-plastic jobs with solid butane-sponge tires and air-compressor springs and the multiple gears of a jeep. Best take the west-coast parkway to Kedah, said Bentinck, and then cut over for Patani. They got out of town and across the island in no time, crossed the causeway and plunged into Johore on the yellow-marked express highway.

The Kra Canal far north, cut by the Japs, had relieved Singapore of ship traffic, leaving the Straits free for air service. The face of the whole country had altered, the old native states being merged in the new Malayan Federation; and thanks to growing economic penetration, the flow of traffic was something tremendous.

"No use rushing; we'll stop at Kuala Lumpur tonight," said Bentinck. "They have a good rest-house there. Been down in the islands lately? Man, they're something to see these days! The boom is just tree-men just! And talk about fortunes being made! Well, I suppose you've struck some lead in this Dr. Li case, since you're heading north."

Hanlon told of the pictures and what he had discovered.



*Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson*



girls; she's smart. I'll bet they figured just as you have, same deduction. But it's a job beyond their ability. They just let Quest do it and take the risks, even if it costs high. For, old son, it'll be risky as hell to interfere with Malay vengeance."

"You may be right, of course."

"I'd wager on it. People who hate Dr. Li would as soon as not kill his daughters. Yes sir! Those daughters aren't such dumb clucks as you think. They aim to keep on living."

Hanlon mentally readjusted his sights; he was inclined, now to agree.

The road was magnificent, piercing hills and plantations, skirting larger towns, holding straight to the mark. It would be different in the mountains tomorrow, said Bentinck. Before sunset they were in the old Selangor sultanate, and by dark drew up at the Kuala Lumpur dak-bungalow.

THAT evening Hanlon and Bentinck went over the pictures of the Drifting Face together. One link of confirmation resulted. Bentinck was fussing with the picture whose background showed city roofs, with a minaret and a pagoda. Suddenly he exclaimed aloud.

"Here, look! This skyline might be anything, savvy? But now"—he

Hanlon almost lost his footing—not quite. He began firing rapidly. The Malay with the rifle pitched over.

"They were mailed from Singora, and the meaning of the trigrams is obvious: a lake or marsh, near or in some hills. That's the lead. But now something else has come up to give it point. Singora is near Patani, eh?"

Bentinck assented. "Before the war that region was under Siamese influence, with the Sultan of Patani the big shot. All a poisonous lot, if you ask me, half Malay, half Siamese. He

and his family, except for one son, were wiped out by the Japs."

"My hunch is to find that son, and we'll find Dr. Li, or what's left of him," said Hanlon. "The girls think he's alive and prisoner; I'm going on their intuition." He sketched his deductions. "Funny those gals couldn't have hit on such a simple thing."

"Don't worry; they did." Bentinck chuckled. "I talked with one of those

covered with bits of paper the minaret and pagoda—"see! That's Patani as it looks when you come down to it on the hill road. Sure as you're born! That minaret was all camouflage."

"Good! Then wash out Singora," said Hanlon, kindling. "Looks as if you've hit it. The spot we're after is a lake or marsh in the hills close to Patani, then. I bet those two gals knew it all the time!"

"Sure they did! These pictures were taken up to Singora and mailed, as a blind. And by your theory, the son of the old sultan is the one who has collared Dr. Li—making him cough up some of his loot for every picture sent. Only—this is all guesswork, mere theory!"

"Of course. Can you come across with a better one?"

Bentinck grinned. "Nope. Only, don't be too cocksure about it, chum. There's no sultan any more; the political readjustment did away with all sultanates except Johore; but this boy—or man now—represents in Malay eyes the old blood royal. He's powerful, plenty! No wonder the Li sisters were scared out! We're liable to walk into something really juicy, too, if we poke around up there. You wouldn't believe how closely some of us operatives are watched by the natives. Sometimes they know our business before we do."

Lying awake in the darkness, Hanlon cursed his own stupidity. Those two girls had handled him like a child. There was danger in this search, and they knew it. That was why Quest, Incorporated, had been engaged from San Francisco; that was the reason for the somewhat elaborate way Miss Li had met him, employing Bob Hilary for the purpose. They were being very circuitous and roundabout. Perhaps they even knew more than they had said. They wanted to stay alive; Quest, Inc., could absorb the danger, and welcome.

"Live and learn," mused Trigger Hanlon, and dropped off to sleep.

BUT they were up with the sun, got breakfast from the Malay caretaker of the rest-house, and were off. They had gone perhaps a hundred miles and were close to Perak, when Hanlon switched on the car television-news. The screen, thus disclosed, bore four English words painted on it: "*Go back or die.*"

Hanlon touched the paint; it was not yet dry. "Hello! Put on sometime this morning," he said. "What d'you think?"

Bentinck nodded. "Somebody's on to us. Maybe that dashed caretaker heard us talking; or your visit to the Li sisters might have done the business. Well, here's definite warning; and the hell with it, say I! Unless you want to back out."

"I see myself," said Hanlon, and rubbed off the painted words. "This shows we're on the right track. Look out for dirty work ahead."

So they did, but none developed. Into the mountains and on through them Bentinck struck, abandoning the highway, taking unpaved dirt roads that would have foundered any pre-war car, but the four-wheel drive

laughed at obstacles and roads alike. They came out at last on the east coast highway.

"I want you to check on that view of Patani for yourself," Bentinck said. "We'll be there by sunset or before. There's a fine new rest-house just outside the old town. I'll drift among the bazaars for an hour or so and see what I can pick up about any lake. While I think of it, are you acquainted with those hand guns they developed toward the close of the war for Commando and Ranger use? The silent revolver type, I mean."

Hanlon laughed. "I carried one the last six months of the war. Why?"

Bentinck reached out and snapped open a hidden compartment under the seat, to disclose two of the deadly little Hamiltons that did so much to break the last of the Japanese morale before the end of the savage Pacific fighting, and boxes of ammunition.

"There are some gas-shells, including cyanide, tracer bullets, and plain ones," he said, and closed the compartment again. "We may need these."

"Against the law, isn't it?" Hanlon commented. "Thought all gas was barred, too."

"The company has permission from the Singapore control," said Bentinck.

"Good idea. I'll take it up with Reeves when I get home; we should have those things for general company use. I was down in Brazil last month, and one would have come in mighty handy with a few gas-shells."

The sun was still above the hills when they slid through a new cut at the top of a long grade, and Bentinck halted the car.

Before them was a view that extended far out to sea. Close at hand were the hills, beyond them the lowlands and the flat roofs of Patani along the shore, and on farther the sparkling waters. Putting up his hands, Hanlon blocked off the view of the city skyline, and grunted.

"You're right, sure enough—might be the same, from a different angle. Not proved, but looks probable."

"My guess would be that the spot we're looking for," Bentinck said as they started on, "is somewhere among those foothills ahead, probably close to the city. We'll see."

The rest-house was on a hillside above the old town—a neat place in charge of a Babu from Calcutta, who compounded a really admirable curvy for dinner. The meal over, Hanlon lit a cheroot and made himself comfortable, while Bentinck went into the city.

"*Go back or die!*" Hanlon smiled at thought of this crudely melodramatic warning, but did not disdain it in the least. By this time there was a distinct wane in the shocking wave

of murder and violent crime that followed on the heels of war; respect for human life was struggling back to peace-time levels, but slowly. In such back-country places as this, life was still the cheapest thing going. That was why he had carefully told the Babu they were heading on in the morning for Singora and the north; the word would be passed on.

Bentinck returned in an hour, cheerfully humming the Aussie war-tune of "*Bless 'Em All!*" He swung up on the veranda and took a chair beside Hanlon.

"Got it," he said, and dropped his voice. "Want to canvass the situation now?"

"Play safe and wait till we get away from here in the morning. Sure you've got it?"

"Definitely."

Hanlon yawned. "Then say we turn in. I'm fagged doing nothing but ride."

MORNING saw them up with the sun and away early, the well-tipped Babu screeching blessings after them. Bentinck headed straight back the way they had come.

"Being watched anyhow, we'd fool no one by starting north and then turning back," he said. "About four miles back, a hill road branches off: remember passing it?"

"Vaguely."

"That road leads on for another five miles and ends at a little summer palace of the old sultan. Not much of a place, but it has an artificial lake and a view of the city, so it's in the hills. I heard about it last night from bazaar gossip. The place is ruined, haunted, and no one would go there for love or money. A real outpost of hell by all accounts."

"Sounds like our destination," said Hanlon.

"That son of the old sultan lives back in the hills; no one will talk about him. His name is Tungku Muda, or Prince Muda. And that's all I know. Now, you give the orders."

"Let's go slap at it," said Hanlon. "As you say, it's no use trying to fool anybody. And I'd feel safer with a Hamilton in my pocket."

Bentinck opened the secret panel and they got out the guns and cartridges. Bentinck loaded with plain bullets; Hanlon chose cyanide shells. These deadly loads lacked range but made up by dire effectiveness at anything around thirty feet.

They branched off on the dirt road. This led directly into jungled hills, where trees and creepers shut out the world. The road was much overgrown and at times a mere track, now crawling through lush vegetation, now mounting along a hill-shoulder.

The brilliant greens, the flash of bright-hued birds, the distant drumming of argus pheasants, the downpour of stark heat, told of a strange new environment closing them in, and a savage one.

"Prime tiger country," Bentinck said. "Nearly there, by the speedometer."

And suddenly, without warning, they were there, bursting from a thicket of bamboos into a sunlit opening on a hillside, the sea and the city in distant panorama, and before them their destination, the road's end.

Here was a walled *kampung* or enclosure, once gay with flowers but now a thorny waste, its ruined gates wide open. Beyond this, on the edge of a small and slimy lake and extending out over the water, was a small structure of wood built in high-peaked Siamese style, brilliant with bright hues and lavish gilding. No one was in sight. Heaps of ruins by the water marked native huts fallen into decay. The place had all the bitter air of desertion and disuse.

The car halted by the gates. Hanlon got out.

"Stay here while I look around."

"No, thanks," said Bentinck, following him. "If you get it, I get it."

Hanlon shrugged and started forward. At closer approach, the building lost beauty; the lacquers were faded and cracked, gaps appeared in walls and corners, the entrance doors stood half ajar, creepers had begun to envelop everything in living green.

"Must be a crawly place at night," said Bentinck. "Ware snakes!"

Hanlon tugged at the doors, which creaked open. The rains had been here; empty rooms were filled with moldered matting, huge lichens clustered on walls and floor, an odor of death and damp decay pervaded all.

On to a tattered, green-rotting curtain woven from leaves of the mengkuang palm; and past this to a wide, matting-floored chamber open at one side, facing the water.

"Hello! This would be the *balai*, the sultan's audience-room," judged Bentinck. "But would you look at that!"

"That" was a narrow, twenty-foot-long bridge, once bright with carvings and gilding, which led across the water to a little octagonal pavilion. The walls of this were blank; a faint tinkle of bells sounded, green corroded bells strung along the edges of its high-pitched roof.

"There or nowhere," said Hanlon. "Looks like we've drawn blank after all."

He set foot on the bridge. It was rotted and rickety but the piles supporting it seemed sound. Bentinck followed, with a gasp—and no wonder. The water below had once been

a lake, but now it was no more than a marsh, foot-deep in water, slimy and stagnant and reeking to high heaven, and fairly alive with crocodiles. The saurians were crawling over one another. On the far bank was a solid mass of them, sunning.

The bridge planks were loose, but they were of solid teak. They led, at the end, to a door in the side of the octagonal pavilion; this door was closed and held by a massive bar of carved ironwood, set in dragon-shaped supports. Hanlon came to it. He had scant hope now of finding their man, but meant to investigate everything.

He lifted the bar, set it aside, and put hand to the door. This opened easily and promptly. Hanlon shoved aside a matting curtain and stepped into the one large chamber which occupied the interior of the pavilion. At first he thought the place empty; then came a clash and clank of chains, something uprose from a pile of mats in the far corner—and Hanlon froze in sudden comprehension, as Bentinck followed him in.

For there, sure enough, was Dr. Li Yuen Sam.

To a Chinese, as to an Arab, the greatest shame is nakedness. The emaciated thing that stood up at their entry was naked, filthy, mere skin and bones. From an iron ring about his neck, a chain ran to an overhead rafter. To a seven-foot bamboo across his shoulders, his extended hands were chained, so that they could not get at a bandage bound tightly about his eyes and taped in place. Only by that scar on his cheek did Hanlon know this to be his man. Dr. Li quavered out faltering words, in English and Malay mingled.

"Is that you, Tungku Muda? And you want another picture made—another hoard of treasure uncovered! I'll do it, I'll do it! Only give me back my sight—I'll do anything! Never mind the picture. I'll give you everything I have left, just to let me see again until I die! Will you do it?"

A shiver of horror passed over Hanlon. Here was a torture surpassing the keenest physical agonies invented by Nazi storm troopers—the torture of blind helplessness. This bent wreck of humanity, however great his crimes, had never deserved such cruelty; Tungku Muda, in his vengeance, had passed all human limits.

Hanlon tried to speak, and words failed him. Bentinck was cursing softly. At the sound, Dr. Li started and stiffened.

"Who is there? Who?" he cried out frantically. "A white man? An Englishman?"

"Okay, Dr. Li," said Hanlon. "Your pictures did the work. We've come

to get you out of here— Oh, the devil!"

For at his words, the unhappy creature emitted a wild, heart-piercing cry and then tumbled forward in a dead faint.

"I was too cursed awkward about it," growled Hanlon. "Come on, see what we can do."

The floor under their feet consisted of bare ironwood or *bilian* poles, not closely set, the water showing below; they had to step carefully to reach the prostrate man. On the mats stood a jar of water and another of moldy food—nothing more.

Hanlon got him rid of the bandage. The manacles were locked; Bentinck slid the bamboo pole clear so that the man's hands fell, but could do nothing with the irons or the chain at his neck. The Aussie stood up.

"Lord, what a filthy mess! I have tools in my bag; I'll get 'em. We can cut him free, anyhow."

"Good idea," said Hanlon. "I could do with a cigarette and some clear air, too. What's that?"

He had caught a rattle of planks from outside. He jumped for the entrance, tugged away the rotted curtain, passed through the doorway—and halted barely in time. In front of him was nothing. A dozen of the planks were gone from the bridge here.

Two Malays, each bearing a heavy plank, were retreating to shore. On the far side of the gap stood a man clad in a crimson silk sarong and girt with a large and handsome kris. He waved a hand at Hanlon and Bentinck and laughed. He was a young man, and the face under his scarlet cap was a flat brown Malay face.

"Welcome, gentlemen, welcome!" he exclaimed. "This is a surprise indeed! Had I known you were here, we would have waited before making repairs to the bridge—"

"Repairs, hell!" Bentinck cut short the mocking words with a storm of angry Malay.

Prince Muda, for this was indeed the Tungku or prince, merely laughed again.

"Never mind threats, my friends. If you wish to cross, by all means do so; my men may shoot at your legs, but that will be good sport. And bring Dr. Li with you, by all means."

He retreated hastily, as a number of Malays appeared to right and left of the bridge; he vanished from sight. His men settled down with rifles, jesting and grinning. Hanlon looked at the stringers of the bridge. It was possible to cross by them, yes; but thought of what a fall would mean, with that slimy crocodile-crawling horror below, was a nasty jolt.

"He's got us and he means to do us in," said Bentinck in a low voice.

"Right. It's now or never," said Hanlon. He produced cigarettes, lit one, and held the match for the Aussie. "If we wait, as they're sure we will, we'll lose nerve and he'll gain confidence. Also, he'll have more men assembled. The thing to do is to strike here and now, do it fast and before he looks for anything."

"I believe you're right, old chap. But what the devil can we do? Be damned if I want to chance going across on a four-inch stringer with those muggers underneath!"

Hanlon squinted at the opposite bank.

"That's in easy pistol-range, easy! How's your shooting?"

"Not bad. But our pistols against rifles—"

"Don't give 'em a chance; never give the other fellow a chance," said Hanlon. "I'll take the stringer; you cover me. And first, a barrage of cyanide gas."

He brought out his Hamilton; Bentinck caught his arm.

"Wait! What about Dr. Li?"

"Be damned to him. You wait here with him. If I get across, I'll fetch the planks back. They're piled up yonder. Ready?"

Bentinck stood aside. "Those cyanide shells are ranged at thirty feet," he said.

"Just about right," said Hanlon, and lifted the weapon.

NO wonder the Hamilton had been outlawed with the war's end; it made no more sound than a cap-pistol, nor as much. The men opposite broke into a new storm of jeers and mocking shouts as Hanlon placed his shots to cover them. The light drift of gas appeared: a man leaped up like a stricken deer and fell back. Then the deadly gas took the others.

Hanlon was already going at the nearest stringer. He was sure-footed, cool of head, and went at it fast. One rifle exploded ahead of him, answered by the little pop of Bentinck's weapon; that was all. Then, at the last step, his foot slipped on the slimy teak. He fell forward, caught the first board, burst into a cold sweat as he hung, and a moment later was drawing himself up and rolling over. He had made it.

He rose and had one glimpse of contorted, writhing figures. Pinching his nostrils tight shut, with one hand, he darted at the pile of boards, caught up two in his free hand, and dragged them back beyond danger before letting himself breathe. He placed them and eyed the gap. Ten more: the thought of facing his own gas anew was unpleasant.

Taking out his Hamilton, he began to reload, and looked across at Bent-

"See if you can get Li's chain free from the rafter. If so, fetch him out. Cut him loose later on."

Bentinck nodded and turned into the prison-chamber. Hanlon eyed the structure opposite, wondering where Prince Muda might be, and waited. Nothing happened. A light breeze was blowing; another five minutes and the gas would clear sufficiently for them to get through. He cuddled the grip of the Hamilton comfortingly; he had reloaded with tracer bullets, having brought no more gas shells.

Might chance the planks now, he thought, and stood up. He advanced toward them and pocketed the weapon. He was upwind and should be safe; it took cold nerve to run the chance, however. A deep breath, and he darted forward, grabbed at the planks, and staggered back with four of the heavy teak slabs in his arms.

When they were in place, the gap was half closed. A man could jump it now; but not a walking corpse heavy with chains. Too bad. He eyed the empty structure again, and went back doggedly. The absence of Tungku Muda worried him; the Malay had not been fetched back by the one shot, yet must be somewhere about.

The last trip, this. Holding his breath, he loaded up with three of the planks; then, hearing a clash of metal, looked back along the bridge. Bentinck and the deathly figure of Dr. Li were just emerging from the pavilion. Hanlon stayed for no more but went back on the jump, dropped his planks, and laid them across the gap, spacing them and two of the others. Bentinck was holding up the staggering figure, and led him at the planks. Blinking, Dr. Li recoiled. The water was not six feet below; a twenty-foot croc lashed the mud and slime and slid away.

"Come on, blast it!" snarled Bentinck, then his voice shrilled. "Look out, Trigger! Look out—"

Hanlon glanced around. From the doorway of the *balai* or audience-room, Tungku Muda and another man were just emerging. As he looked, came a clash of metal and a wild scream from beside him—and he whipped around to see Dr. Li and Bentinck plunge down, taking two of the loose planks with them. Just how it happened, he never knew.

A yell from the shore, the explosion of a rifle, a bullet whipping the air

past his head. Already he was down, lying flat, both arms reaching toward the figures floundering in the muddy slime below. His voice drove at them. Bentinck got one of the fallen planks underfoot, gripped the hand of Dr. Li, and reached up. He touched fingers with Hanlon, who never forgot the frightful horror of those two faces underneath him. A stretch, as a bullet crashed the wood under him, and the fingers hooked and clenched.

Then Hanlon lifted. He saw a swirl and another swirl as crocodiles rushed; he had Bentinck up. Dr. Li was almost clear of the water. Hanlon got to his knees, pushed up, came erect. Bentinck caught the stringer, pulled himself up, pulled Dr. Li after him—

Hanlon felt the impact of the bullet as the rifle roared again. He almost lost footing—not quite. His Hamilton slid out; he began firing rapidly, noiselessly. The Malay with the rifle pitched over. Prince Muda, a pistol in his hand, was on the bridge. Hanlon shot him twice and saw him topple over into the water—then he himself sank down and saw nothing more.

HE revived, to find himself still there on the bridge, Bentinck and Dr. Li, with chains dangling, at work upon him. A wind was loose upon the sunlight, the palms and casuarina trees were rustling, the stinking air was fresh and sweet.

"Did I get it?" he asked.

"Might be worse," said Bentinck between oaths. "Gashed up your side and glanced off a rib. Come on, no time to lose here. I've got a compress on the wound, anyhow."

Hanlon was helped to his feet. All three went on, slimy and cramped with horror, to the shore. The building beyond was vacant, the gas had blown clear. They passed through and gained the kampong and the car, seeing no one. Bentinck bundled the other two in, climbed under the wheel, and they were off. . . .

Now turn to the words of Hanlon's report, here in File R17W, 458B, and you will find his masterpiece of description. It reads:

Located Dr. Li Yuen Sam near Patani, brought him home via motor. Delivered him as per instructions to his family. Receipt for delivery herewith. Applying for three weeks' sick-leave to repair damages incurred in line of duty.

He does not mention that, two days after his safe delivery in Singapore, Dr. Li Yuen Sam was shot to death by persons unknown. All things considered, perhaps that was to have been expected.

"The Affair of the Two Thirteens" follows in this series "Quest, Inc." Along with a fine story of the North African front by William Makin and many other notable features, it will appear in our forthcoming August issue.

A dramatic story of Russian tanks in action.

by *Alexander Poliakov*

WHITE

CHAPTER SIX

THE MARCH OVER THE ICE

THE commander of the unit to which our tank battalion belonged explained to us the importance of Lake Ilmen. Five rivers flow into it from the south. Ranging in width from seventy-five meters to half a kilometer, these rivers absorb dozens of tributaries. The lake itself and the river mouths afford the best natural protection for troops on the defensive, and ever since autumn the Germans had been holding this excellent line. It had been their main support for the blockade of Leningrad. During the winter, they had strengthened it by erecting a large number of fortifications: strong points, trenches and barbed-wire entanglements. They had laid mine fields, and set up batteries of trench mortars and heavy guns. The entire area for hundreds of kilometers south of the lake was converted into a powerfully fortified district.

"That is why I have asked you to part for one day from your beloved caterpillars, comrade tankmen, and to take to your skis for a deep reconnaissance operation," the commander concluded.

Within twenty-four hours our tankmen on skis, under the command of Major Maximov, covered about forty kilometers. Dressed in white hoods, the scouts penetrated far into the frosty forest and onto the lake itself. With infinite caution so as not to be heard by the Germans, they bored holes in the ice to gauge its thickness.

After a day's rest, the tank battalion received the field orders for which they had been so impatiently waiting. They were instructed to cross Lake Ilmen and its tributaries during the night, penetrate thirty to forty kilometers behind the enemy's lines and launch a surprise attack on the flank of his main forces in the Staraya Russa area. Their objective was to encircle the 290th Infantry Division and the Skull-and-Bones SS Division of the 16th Army. As dusk fell, the engines began to hum and our battalion set out from its temporary camp.

Our five KV's started off with a thunderous roar that shook the earth. One could hear the rattle of the window panes in the peasant houses and the dull thud of the tree trunks felled by our machines as they plunged

through the woods. A raging blizzard conveniently covered our approach to the starting point of our offensive. On the outskirts of a small village we halted for the last time before the decisive thrust, to have our tanks inspected. We had to reach the battle area in perfect order—a difficult operation under the circumstances, for several water barriers separated us from our objective.

Lieutenant Astakhov made the rounds of the tanks accompanied by the chief engineer. "How's your machine?" "In perfect order," replied the tankmen in one voice.

Tarpaulins were removed from the guns and machine guns, shells were prepared and cartridge disks mounted. We had to be ready for any emergency. It was not impossible that the enemy might discover our presence sooner than we wished, and that fighting would start at once.

The tank column was accompanied by an infantry group which was to form a landing party. The machines at the head carried sappers whose assignment was to destroy the anti-tank mines. The infantrymen were ordered to take their places on the tanks. The storm was so furious that the order was scarcely audible as it passed along from tank to tank.

The white bodies of the tanks suddenly seemed to swell as white-cloaked infantrymen holding white automatics in their hands clambered on the machines. Despite the darkness, the monstrous silhouettes of the KV's were sharply distinguishable in the long column of several dozen tanks, which advanced with a thunderous clanking.

A dash of about ten kilometers and Lake Ilmen was before us. Its waters are not very deep, but they always teem with fish, especially since the war, for all fishing has stopped, even at the height of the season. In winter, the volume of water in the lake is greatly reduced; the severe frosts freeze it almost to its floor.

The heavy tank on which I was riding together with a group of infantrymen cautiously lumbered forward across the ice. We were ordered to jump off and walk alongside. Old Ilmen, as though annoyed by the sudden disturbance of its nocturnal peace, creaked and groaned as if shaken by a storm. The fifty-ton machines—this meant a pressure of 300 pounds

per square centimeter of ice—caused the ice to crack with a strange tinkling sound, and on places where the ice did not reach the bottom, its surface could be seen palpably bending under their weight. The other heavy machines were not permitted to move along the tracks of the first ones, but branched off to the right or left. Finally the lake was left behind.

We now had to cross the river near the Nazi lines. Because of the current, the ice on the river was much thinner, and had to be reinforced in order to support the weight of the heavy tanks. A few minutes before we came up, tankmen from another unit who had failed to take the necessary precautions met with a serious accident. In the middle of the river which was only a hundred meters wide, one of the heavy tanks crashed through the ice. The crew barely managed to save itself through the upper hatch.

Our engineers had prepared two thousand logs which they were supposed to spread over the ice and let freeze in. But we had arrived ahead of schedule, the Ilmen was already behind us, and the log-laying was still in progress. What was to be done? We could not afford to lose a minute. It was midnight. In a few hours day would break and the enemy air force would discover us before the completion of our first crossing. . . .

Every passing minute threatened our carefully planned operation with failure. But, once again, necessity proved the mother of invention.

"Let's demolish the nearest village and use the timber from its houses to bridge the ice," suggested Major Maximov to our sappers.

"But how will you get them here?" they asked.

"We'll use our tanks, and then at least our advance can proceed."

No sooner said than done. An hour and a half later, our tanks brought a whole trainload of beams from the nearest village. Overjoyed at this unexpected solution to their problem, our sappers enthusiastically fell to work. We were sorry to have to tear down the house of the collective farmers, but we had no other choice. They were the only means at hand to pave our way to victory. By tearing down the houses of one village we

HIGH LIGHTS o f

MAMMOTHS

Translated by Norman Guterman

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would be able to recapture scores and hundreds of others from the Nazis. We looked on as the water drawn up by pumps froze and cemented the bridge of logs with ice. On some of the logs we noticed odds and ends such as a housewife's threaded needle which had apparently been stuck into a wall and forgotten there, or bits of flowered paper or newspaper.

Soon the small and medium tanks crossed the river one after another, followed by the cautiously crawling heavy KV's. We were now on the opposite bank, and the Germans had not yet noticed us. Four powerful machines took the tank that had been submerged in tow. At a given signal, thousands of units of horsepower yanked the fifty-ton machine out of the water throwing up heaps of ice as they dragged it to the shore. The river looked as though it had been split in two by a gigantic battering ram. The machine itself was an unusual sight; covered with stalagmites and stalactites, with a trunk of ice instead of a gun, it looked like some monster of the ice age horrible enough to frighten any but the stoutest warriors. It took two hours of hard work to unfreeze it. At last its motor started and all the other apparatus began to function. Its crew, on the brink of death only a few hours ago, was in the highest spirits. "She is proof against fire and water," they joked gaily as they bustled about their machine.

Our column resumed its advance through woods and swamps. Day began to break when, still unnoticed by the enemy, we approached a second crossing. The sappers worked with gusto, carrying logs on their shoulders for several kilometers for the crossing, and soon a second bridge was laid for our tanks. It was broad daylight now. The German soldiers could hardly believe their eyes when they saw a whole column of tanks moving along the valleys which constituted their line of defense. They were taken completely by surprise. The Nazi artillery had relied on infantry patrols, but that night the patrols failed to sound the alarm, having been quietly wiped out by our ski detachments.

Having crossed the river we outflanked the Nazis. Their confusion

was indescribable; they had not imagined that our tanks could cross the frozen surface of Lake Ilmen and two rivers besides. The German guns had to make a ninety-degree turn to the left before opening fire. The first enemy shells burst on our bridge. "Shut the hatches! Watch the enemy!" Astakhov commanded. The infantry took cover behind the advancing machines. Although their ranges had been taken long ago, the Nazis were apparently too frightened to fire accurately. Our sappers who at first had scattered along both sides of the bridge, now ran back to it and resumed their work, helping to get the rest of the tanks to the opposite bank.

Astakhov had already crossed the river. Enemy shells and mines were coming dangerously close to our bridge. A few sappers were wounded, but none left his post. They bravely hammered back into place those logs that had been jerked out by the crossing tanks. But the German fire gradually grew more accurate; a few more seconds, and two shells tore up the logs, causing two enormous geysers of water mixed with ice. The whole bridge began to heave. Suddenly a new explosion came with a roar: but this time it was Astakhov's tank which had fired. Having located an enemy battery, he at once began to pound it. Two or three other tanks opened fire and the German battery was silenced.

DURING this engagement, none of our men was killed, but two sappers fell into a hole in the ice. They swam frantically in an effort to keep afloat and were finally pulled out by their comrades. While our sappers rushed to repair the damaged bridge and to build another one a short distance from the first, I ran over to the wounded comrades, who had been placed near one of the tanks. The forty-degree frost froze their drenched hoods into rigid armor. They looked like two white coffins made of ice in which two human faces could be discerned. An army surgeon and his orderlies used sappers' shovels to hack off the wounded men's frozen clothes. From the boys' drawn cheekbones and clenched jaws it could be seen that they were suffering terribly, but it was absolutely necessary to remove the ice in which they were encased in order

to stop any further bleeding. Blood was still flowing from their injured legs and arms with such force that it seeped through their clothes and thawed up the ice around them, dyeing it a deep red with a tinge of gold. By the time the two boys had their wounds dressed and were carried to an ambulance, the last tank of our column had crossed the river and was lumbering along the opposite bank.

Apparently Astakhov's fire had effectively silenced the enemy batteries, for half an hour later we had reached a third water barrier without German interference. The familiar front-line din of rifles and machine guns once again struck our ears. It was caused by our advanced infantry detachments which were now engaging the enemy flank and rear. We proceeded to organize our third crossing. The operation proved easy this time, and was notable for the exemplary application of a classic military stratagem. When we reached the appointed place, a Nazi bomber appeared in the sky. We were ordered to take cover under the snowdrifts in the forests where we lay still while the enemy plane busily bombed a dummy bridge of branches and brushwood which our sappers had thoughtfully created.

When the Nazi flyer, obviously satisfied with his achievement, flew back to his base, our battalion quickly dashed across the river over a bridge which had been concealed under a coat of snow. Then we advanced across seven to eight kilometers of swampy grounds—not without experiencing some difficulties, for even during the winter a bog may prove as miry for a tank as during the summer. One of our medium machines sank in the mire to its very turrets, piling up masses of hot peat as it struggled to disengage itself. After the machine was rescued, our command began to look for a different path. Sparse woods extended along one side of the bogs. "Trample down the woods and clear the way for the column!—in my opinion, a job for your KV tanks," said Major Maximov turning to Astakhov. "What do you say?"

A quick inspection of the woods revealed that most of the trees were aspens, willows and young pines measuring perhaps fifteen centimeters in diameter—no obstacle to our Mam-

moths. Led by Astakhov, the column of heavy tanks cut down the trees as though they were a light picket fence. Soon the road was cleared and our advancing tanks reached a new water barrier, about 300 meters wide, with steep banks rising as high as twenty meters. This time the Germans were not taken by surprise. On the opposite bank they fiercely resisted the assault of our advance infantry detachments, amidst deafening fire from mortars and automatics. But the Nazis were yet to learn what it meant to have in their rear, almost under their noses, the long-barreled guns of our powerful land fortresses.

Major Maximov ordered his battalion to deploy for charging the enemy and to open fire up his positions across the river. "Lieutenant Astakhov!" he said. "You remain on this shore and take command. Direct your fire so as to cover my movements." The Major himself, with small tanks in dispersed formation, dashed across the ice.

The sudden appearance of Soviet armor which seemed to have emerged from the frozen river stunned the enemy. From the leading tanks the confusion in the German camp could be seen clearly. Soon the enemy fire became desultory. Maximov with the units commanded by Fetlikhin and Maslov smashed at the first line of Nazi blockhouses, while Astakhov maintained a withering fire to cover the advancing Russian tanks. Simultaneously, the sappers began to put up a new wooden flooring to permit the passage of the heavy machines. Twilight fell. Under enemy fire, but without losing any men or machines, we crossed the fourth river.

We had now been in action for twenty-four hours. No one had eaten anything or even thought of eating. We thought only of establishing ourselves firmly in our newly won positions. The Germans retreated, abandoning their blockhouses, guns and dead. Our group commander ordered a small respite or, more accurately, a short period of preparation for a fierce new battle. The tankmen climbed out of their machines adjusting their sweaters and overalls. They were unrecognizable, their faces smeared with oil and blackened with soot. Although weary from the day-long battle, they refused to rest, proceeding instead to fill up their empty munitions cases and fuel tanks. One tank driver who was about to doze off drew a few angry words from Dormidontov who scolded him for "indulging in illusions that this was the time for sleep." But somehow we managed to get a two-hour rest.

The tankmen fully deserved it. Their advance across the frozen rivers in heavy tanks was a great and unprecedented achievement. Our men felt that they had accomplished something significant although they knew that the big battles were still ahead.

CHAPTER SEVEN FIRST BATTLES. FIRST TROPHIES

FIVE kilometers ahead of us was the village of Yuryevo, the terminus of the railroad, now transformed into a Nazi strong point. Our plans called for its capture at any cost.

Water barriers were again the principal obstacle to our advance. A river 450 meters wide—the filth on our path—separated us from Yuryevo. At daybreak, our battalion deployed for battle, while the tanks waited under cover of the oak woods along the bank. Our assignment was to support the formations on our left. We reconnoitered in the dawn. The blizzard that had blinded us the day before had subsided: a clear moon was shining and the cold had become more intense. Thick layers of hoar gathered on the trees near the tanks, for the machines exhaled warm air as their mighty mechanisms breathed and labored.

Leaving our tanks, we moved silently in the early morning mist to the very edge of the river we had to cross. Through our binoculars we could discern the hazy outline of logs and beams disposed along the opposite bank and apparently intended to look like the remains of last year's floating operations. We assumed that these fortifications were partly real and partly sham. Two recently built water towers were used by the enemy as observation posts. A barely perceptible stream of air rising from the deep gullies on the other side betrayed the breathing of the Nazis in the dugouts and timbered earthworks.

I looked at Major Maximov's swarthy, oblong face. He had put down his binoculars and was looking around in a rather nonchalant manner. Suddenly his eyes gleamed, and he said in a resolute voice:

"Let's go."

We returned to our positions near the woods. The Major announced his plan of attack: "We'll ask our artillery to give them a matinee performance, blast all those rat holes and knock down the observation towers. Then we'll dash across with our light and medium tanks without laying pontoons. It worked last night,

didn't it?" A brave and resolute commander. Major Maximov intended to lead the attack in one of the vanguard tanks. The heavy machines were to cross later under the command of Commissar Kharchenko.

In accordance with our plan, our artillery opened a heavy barrage on the opposite bank. Protected by this fire, our tanks with infantrymen placed on them dashed across. The Germans had scattered anti-tank mines on the frozen surface of the water—we called them "pancakes" because of their shape. Apparently they had not seriously believed that we would try to cross in winter, otherwise they would have covered the mines with ice. Our sappers jumped down and removed the green disks of these explosives with great dispatch. "Better not eat those pancakes," Major Maximov warned them jovially.

The Germans directed a heavy fire from guns and mortars on the frozen river. But their shells failed to pierce the thick layer of ice and the tanks continued their advance. Then the Germans played their last card. They sent out five Junker planes to prevent us from crossing. One after another heavy bombs dropped on the ice causing ear-splitting explosions and shaking the entire shore. But the tanks sped on skilfully manoeuvring around the bomb-craters, and reached the opposite bank. During this operation only one of our medium tanks failed to cross. A stream of water caused by an exploding bomb temporarily blinded its driver who plunged into the icy bomb-hole. But only the rear end of the tank was submerged, and its crew escaped unharmed.

At 6 P.M. Major Maximov, supported by the fire of his whole battalion, rushed the village. Our infantrymen and sappers mounted on tanks wiped out the Nazi garrison with bayonets and hand grenades. The day was ours. Now the heavy tanks moved up across the newly erected pontoons.

The local inhabitants who had been hiding in cellars, behind snow drifts and in the woods emerged to greet us. "So our boys have returned after all," they said, weeping with joy. There were no men among them—only women and children, ragged, emaciated, grimy from their long stay in improvised hiding places under the ground.

Most of the houses had remained intact and one by one the women returned to their homes. At the very edge of the village, near the place where we had entered it, there was a smoldering heap of ashes—all that remained of a house. A woman sat sobbing there on a pile of bricks, her head in her hands. Five little chil-

dren huddled around her. The oldest, a girl of ten, held her baby sister in her arms and tried to console her mother. The other three youngsters displayed the usual carefree attitude of children, scampering about in the ash pile or warming themselves at a small bonfire which they kept going by blowing on it. A small boy was brandishing a baked potato, which he had salvaged from the wreckage.

I approached the woman and spoke to her. She raised her head with a start. Her face was emaciated and grief-stricken.

"Was this your home?" I asked.

"Yes. But I haven't been living here for three months," she said in a low voice.

"Why not?"

"The Germans drove us out. My house was at the very edge of the village and that brought us bad luck. The Nazis set up a gun inside it to protect their position."

Piles of shell cases and mutilated German corpses were scattered amid the ruins of the house which the Nazis had turned into their main defense bastion. I recalled that our artillery barrage from across the river had been concentrated upon this very part of the village. The German battery stationed here and all its crew had been destroyed by a direct hit which caused their munitions supply to explode. In the course of this operation, the poor woman's house was completely wrecked, but that could not be helped—war is war. To effect our first river crossing we had dismantled several collective farmers' houses in order to build a pontoon bridge and get behind the enemy lines. This time the destruction of one house had made it possible for us to liberate an entire village from the Nazi gangsters.

"I realize you had to do it," said the woman through her tears, as though echoing my own thoughts. In her mind there was no doubt as to who was responsible for her wrecked home.

We took the woman and her children to the next house, where a few of our tankmen had gathered. Reassured by our soldiers, Alexandra Borisova told us her whole story. As she talked, the expression of hopeless grief on her face gave place to one of anger and determination.

For seven months she and her unfortunate family had suffered incredible hardships. Her husband was in the army. Of the five children with her, four were her own: Zena, aged ten; Valentina, aged seven; Tonya, five, and Vova, three. Sima, the fifth child, was a boy of eight whom she had adopted. Valentina had a bandage around her wounded right hand, the result of a German bomb. After being driven out of her house, the

mother and her four children had wandered about in the neighboring villages, living in earth huts in the woods. To feed her family she had to burrow in the snow and dig up grain that had been left in the fields. In the woods she met Sima, an abandoned orphan, and adopted him.

Sima, who had blond hair and beautiful hazel brown eyes, was now engaged in lively conversation with the tankmen, while dividing among the girls the baked potato he had salvaged. He, too, told us his story. His father had been killed in the Finnish campaign, and his mother had died in a Nazi air raid. He came from Staraya Russa, and his nearest relative was his maternal grandmother who lived in one of the neighboring towns.

"What's your grandmother's name, Sima?" I asked him.

"Granny."

"No, I mean her first and second names."

Sima just frowned in confusion. "Grandmother?" he mumbled in a low voice.

Our tankmen did everything they could to show their sympathy for Borisova. They shared their sugar, bread and tea with her children. They gave her their word of honor that her house would be rebuilt. "We'll build it ourselves," said one of the tankmen.

We were already in the street when Sima came running after us bareheaded.

"Say, Uncle, can I be a tankman?" he asked eagerly.

"Of course you can," I said. "But you must wait till you grow up. They don't take them at your age."

"Oh, they'll take me," he replied. "All my uncles are in the Red Army."

"What uncles?" I said. "Why haven't you mentioned them before?"

"They're my mother's brothers: Uncle Lenya, Uncle Vanya, Uncle Vasya, Uncle Kirya and Uncle Andrusha."

"And their second names?"

"Timofeyev, all of them."

Now at last I knew the name of his grandmother. "All right, Sima," I said, "get ready to join the Red Army. But first we'll find your family."

The Nazis had left the mark of their cruelty on the village. Konstantin Popov, a perfectly innocent collective farmer, had been shot before the assembled population. Elizaveta Afanaseyeva was publicly flogged because her children had been found playing with cartridges they had picked up in the street. Now the Nazi gangsters had been driven out, and thousands of Soviet citizens had regained their freedom. Our tankists and infantrymen walked about proud-

ly among their machines surrounded on all sides by the enthusiastic inhabitants. They looked with loathing at the German corpses that littered the village.

Some time later an official report listed the results of our battalion's work in the capture of Yuryevo. Here the most interesting figures are quoted: Germans killed—140. Material captured: 14 guns of various brands all in good condition; 93 automatic rifles; 297 ordinary rifles, 11 trench mortars; 7 anti-tank rifles; 60 trucks; 9 motorcycles; 39 horses; 3 station warehouses containing ammunition, army clothing and foodstuffs. In addition we wiped out the entire battalion headquarters of the 502nd Rifle Regiment, and seized all its documents.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE MAMMOTHS ATTACK

NOW that the last link of the enemy defense chain was broken, every minute was precious—it was essential to pursue him without interruption, not to give him a respite. But equally precious were every drop of fuel, every cartridge and shell, without which we could not advance.

Lack of supplies was holding us up. Our fuel tankers and ammunition trucks had not yet crossed the last river. Our men fretted with impatience. . . . It was night when the supplies finally arrived. Our men were trained to do everything in the dark. Skilfully and quickly they set about refilling their tanks and munitions cases. Everyone tried to get as much as possible, to grab more than the others. Tankmen are never as greedy when they receive their rations of canned food, biscuits and sugar as when they replenish their ammunition. "What's the matter with you, do you begrudge me an extra shell for the Germans?" I heard Tank Commander Kalinichev say in a hurt voice to the chief of supplies. The KV tank crews stocked their ammunition with extraordinary concentration as though they had never seen a shell before. They wanted to cram shells into their vest pockets, anywhere at all. Solovyov, Kalinichev's gunner, stood with a shell in each arm, holding them like babies. He was perplexed—he had no space left for them. . . .

The tankmen were eager for a good hot fight.

Major Maximov assembled the commanders of the crews and explained the next task. The Germans had fled to the village of S. where they

had apparently been reinforced by reserves. They were preparing to make a stand. This new defense line had to be broken and the enemy forced to resume his flight. Astakhov and his tanks were to remain in reserve during the first stage of the operation; they were to be used later—in the course of the battle it would become clear where the KV tanks could be thrown in with the best effect.

Shortly before daybreak the white Mammoth tanks and the baby tanks with white-hooded infantrymen and submachine gunners perched all over them went into battle. On an open field extending in front of the village, the Germans met us with a barrage from their anti-tank guns. The first explosions of enemy shells were our signal to deploy.

I followed the battle from the observation post of our infantry commander. A well-aimed shot from a German gun whipped off the turret of one of our small tanks in the van. The caterpillars of two others were disabled. Seeing the effectiveness of their battery the Germans intensified their mortar and machine-gun fire on our infantry. The men dropped for cover and the tanks fanned out over the field. The momentary confusion in our machines was too apparent not to be noticed by the enemy. As they surged forward drawing the infantry behind them, the Germans showered them with a hail of shells and mines in an attempt to isolate them from the infantry, and the fascist columns launched a counterattack.

Two green rockets soared into the air: the long-awaited signal calling the KV's into battle. Suddenly with a roar that shook the ground and the air, the giants emerged in deployed formation from the grove near the road. The Germans directed a tornado of shells upon them, but our land battleships relentlessly moved forward through the sea of fire.

Our infantry rallied. Behind the steel cover of the tanks that had outstripped them, they began to roll forward in waves. The white disk of the hatch on Astakhov's tank, which was advancing on the right flank, opened, and a red flag flashed three times. This message meant that the third tank was to break into the village.

The third tank, commanded by Lieutenant Chilikin, suddenly enveloped itself with dense black smoke. Rushing at full speed with the ease of a whippet, the land fortress headed straight for the enemy. Through my powerful binoculars I had an excellent view of the German artillerymen.

Their guns fired salvo upon salvo and hit their mark, but the monster was invulnerable. Before their eyes it relentlessly moved forward. A few minutes later, it tore into the village, turned to the right, and began to smash the fascist anti-tank guns and their crews who were trying to escape into shallow ditches.

The thunder in front of us was no longer that of exploding enemy mines and shells, but that of our own tank guns battering at new enemy fire points. From time to time I could see Chilikin's machine flashing amidst houses and trees. I could even distinguish the inscription, "Happy New Year." Our workers' greeting was finally reaching the fascists. Soon other tanks joined Chilikin's. They cut into the dispositions of the German infantry which only a few minutes before had been preparing to counterattack but which was being "ironed" out from both flanks. Those of the gangsters who had not fled in time were squeezed into the snow.

Fifteen minutes later, all five of the KV's were in the village playing havoc with the Nazis who were cornered in barns and attics. Another fifteen minutes, and the rest of us entered the recaptured village. The tanks continued the pursuit of the enemy who ran in terror toward the rear. In the next two villages the KV's met no resistance whatsoever—they made a real triumphal march, punctuated only by a few machine-gun salvos and rifle shots fired by our men as they wiped out a few stragglers who apparently were unable to move fast because of the loot they carried.

We advanced another fifteen kilometers. Our tanks were approaching a big inhabited place and a railroad junction. It was certain that the Germans would defend its approaches with particular stubbornness. Our scouts reported that the town was surrounded by a strong belt of anti-tank fortifications.

Astakhov was radiant after the engagement. "That was the real thing," he said with satisfaction. "I feel all refreshed." The commanders of the other tanks, Yefimov, Chilikin, Kalinichev and Gomofov, were just as jubilant. The crews opened the hatches as wide as they could to show the world their grimy but smiling faces and exchange a few sallies with their comrades.

"Gene!" Konstantinov shouted to Dormidontov at the top of his lungs, "Gene, tell us something about the Nazi illusions!"

"They had no illusions—only confusions!" Dormidontov punned amidst general laughter.

En route, the KV's received an important new assignment: to go around the village of L. in a pincer movement and, without engaging the enemy, to break through to a point five kilometers ahead, and seize the railway tracks and the main highway, along which the columns of German reinforcements were already moving. Major Maximov took his place in one of the KV's. Along with another tank commander, he was to attack the village from the left, while Astakhov, commanding the three remaining machines, was to take it from the right. They were to make a junction on the road beyond the village, in the enemy rear. The village itself was a continuous network of timbered dugouts, each provided with machine guns, large caliber mortars and cannon.

"A hard nut to crack. If we tried to take it by frontal assault we might break our teeth. The tankmen's idea was the right one," remarked the infantry commander as he observed the village from his post. . . .

FROM the very start the battle was one of the fiercest I have ever witnessed. While we thought of it only as a demonstration of what our tanks could do, the Germans, motivated by animal fear of our machines, made a last convulsive effort to bar our way at any cost. The German anti-tank artillery put up real walls of fire. Their roaring shells exploded on the small open field almost within a yard of one another. But during this terrible artillery duel between tanks and anti-tank guns, the main action was taking place unnoticed by the Germans: our KV's were penetrating behind the enemy lines.

Soon they flashed out their first radio report: "Village outflanked, forging ahead." With the help of such signals and the regular reports to the infantry commanders, I was able to follow the development of the action. This is what happened:

Soon after the five KV's effected their junction on the road beyond the village, they were attacked by fire from enemy artillery stationed in a farm to the right. Our tankmen had not expected this. Major Maximov and Astakhov once again divided their forces: the Major moved forward with two tanks while the three under Astakhov concentrated on the enemy batteries which were trying to hinder our operation. A hot engagement followed. Having turned all their turrets to the right, our commanders fired salvo upon salvo on the enemy battery emplacements. "Forward!" signaled Astakhov, and the three KV's moved to wipe out the Germans. From small ditches along the road, small groups of Nazi infantrymen rushed against our tanks, hurling

rockets intended to blind our crews, while others dragged out heavy boxes of explosives. "No doubt the shock tank wreckers mentioned in the German instructions," thought our machine gunners. A few machine-gun salvos, and about half of the attackers were wiped out. But the rest continued to crawl toward the tanks. With a few well-aimed hand grenades, our tankmen finally got rid of all the vermin. In the heat of battle, our men did not forget to help one another. When one of the Nazis managed to climb onto Astakhov's tank, Kalinichev's radio operator, Shishov, directed a machine-gun blast at him, so accurately that, in the words of the crew, the "Nazi was licked down off that tank as though by a cow's tongue." All this while, the three Mammoths moved forward at a furious pace squashing straggling fascists into the snow. At last, the German pillboxes were reached and crushed under the steel paws of our white monsters like so much tinderwood. Then they raced forward to catch up with the other two KV's.

Major Maximov was far ahead, perhaps even too far, having been carried away by his own impetus. After crossing the railway tracks, his tanks raced forward seven kilometers along the highway, where the Germans were bringing up a regiment of motorized infantry. The fascists did not stop when they saw the approaching tanks, apparently taking them for their own in the distance.

"Turn to the left," Maximov commanded the second tank. As a result, the two tanks barricaded the highway. Our gun commanders did not have to be told what to do. While their tanks turned left, their turrets effected a ninety-degree right turn, pointing their guns at the enemy column. Nor was any order required to open a running artillery fire on the fascists who were scared out of their wits.

"We gave them the surprise of their lives," Maximov told me later. "When our first salvos blew up the vanguard trucks with their infantry, the Germans on the others were paralyzed, at a complete loss as to what to do. This was exactly what we wanted."

A few German trucks somehow managed to escape, but nine smashed cars remained on the field full of dead and wounded. In the meantime, Astakhov covered the railroad tracks and the highway and began a battle which lasted five hours without interruption. Not a single German train or truck managed to pass through. Thus, Gomozov's tank stood astride the tracks firing in both directions. Though the battle was successful, Gomozov was dissatisfied with the result. "What's wrong?" I asked him. "The battle wasn't as beautiful as it

"WHITE MAMMOTHS," by ALEXANDER POLIAKOV

should have been," he said. "The best part of the affair miscarried. A fascist armored train advanced on me, and I, dumbbell that I am, was stuck on the tracks. I fired at him a few times. I don't know whether I hit one of his wheels or whether he got scared, but he withdrew and never reappeared. What a beautiful fight it would have been! A tank against an armored train! Will I ever get such an opportunity again?" he concluded mournfully.

Chilikin's tank returned with its hatches smudged and singed by exploded shells. I looked inside and the first thing that caught my eyes were dazzlingly white piles of gauze. Tank Commander Chilikin and his chief gunner Meshchanchikov had been wounded in the head by fragments of an enemy shell.

Kalinichev's tank particularly distinguished itself in the battle for the road, withstanding eighteen attacks from fascist anti-tank guns and infantry shock detachments. His skilful driver, Dormidontov, performed such dizzy pirouettes on the field that the fascist gunners never managed to get him in their gun sights. . . .

The tanks had brilliantly fulfilled their task of cutting the German communication lines. They were soon replaced by infantry which dug in. But despite their success, the tankmen were not happy. Lieutenant Astakhov, company commander, had failed to return from the battle. One thought was in everybody's mind: had he been killed? I evoked his handsome oblong face, with its stubborn forehead and light gray eyes. I went over all the course of our acquaintance: from the shop where he assembled his tank to the moment when he left for the attack. And Lena, his wife, how would she receive this terrible news? But nothing was known as yet. Astakhov, we told ourselves, was not the kind of man to be lost in this manner, without a trace.

CHAPTER NINE

THE DEATH OF COMMISSAR KHARCHENKO

THE following day it was decided that in the forthcoming battle Battalion Commissar Kharchenko would replace Astakhov, the missing commander of the KV tanks. This news spread with lightning speed among our men, who had been depressed by the disappearance of their beloved leader. "Good. The Commissar himself is going to command us," they commented with satisfaction. At once, the spirit of the crews

rose high and preparations for the engagement were pushed forward with redoubled energy. Everyone knew what it meant to be led into battle by this brave officer, whose life story was known to all and was now being repeated among the crews.

"He can do everything in a tank, from driving to firing the guns."

"He commanded a tank company in Finland."

"That's where he earned the Order of the Red Star."

"He has received nine head wounds from shell splinters. Three of them haven't been removed yet. . . ."

Born in Konstantinovka, and formerly a mechanic in the Donbass, Commissar Kharchenko was thirty-five years old. But the grave wounds he had received in Finland had left their mark: his hair was completely gray, and deep wrinkles furrowed his face. Nevertheless, his blue eyes remained merry and with his cheeks reddened by the frost, he seemed rejuvenated. He had a real passion for everything connected with mechanics, for his shop, his motor, his tank.

A few days earlier, accompanied by Bushkov, his technical assistant, he had personally inspected every machine in the battalion, and had even found time to fix a phonograph for his hostess's daughter in the village where he was quartered. Now he was again going over the machines which were stripped for action. Only half an hour remained before the moment agreed upon for the attack. Kharchenko assembled all the crews around his tank.

"I am commanding your company. Do you all know that?" he asked in a hoarse voice.

"We know, we know, Comrade Commissar," replied the tankmen eagerly.

"Have you taken note of what I told you in the tanks?"

"We have."

"Have you repaired everything that had to be repaired?"

"Yes."

The Commissar proceeded to explain the company's task in the coming battle, and slightly raising his voice, concluded: "I want you to fight today three, four, no, ten times more fiercely than yesterday. In the first place, we must avenge Commander Astakhov and his brave crew. In the second place, we must kill no less than a hundred Fritzes for our two wounded comrades Chilikin and Meshchanchikov. In the third place, comrades, do not forget that we are here not to amuse ourselves, but to destroy the fascist vermin, all of them, unless they surrender. You and your

tanks have already scored glorious successes. For the sake of the magnificent workers who made these remarkable tanks, for the sake of all the workers and collective farmers who sent us gifts, for the sake of Stalin, let us double our achievements.

"To your tanks, march!" Commissar Kharchenko commanded, and himself got into Yefimov's machine.

When the Commissar urged the crews to fight for the sake of those who were working for them behind the lines, they recalled the day on which the gifts had been distributed and felt deeply moved. How much tenderness and love there was in the letters accompanying the packages! "Fight the fascists ruthlessly, fight with courage. We will soon come to help you," wrote two high school boys from the Ural. "All our hopes are in you, all our love and respect go to you," said a letter written in a childish hand at the dictation of an illiterate old collective farmer from the Cheliabinsk region. The old man, no doubt feeling that mere words were not enough to express his respect, added an original gift which happened to be allotted to Commissar Kharchenko. It was a big piece of frozen dough. Comrade Popov, shop fireman of the Cheliabinsk plant, told us that the old man's gift had at first been refused at the collection centre. He had then opened it to show what was inside. On New Year's Eve the Commissar again opened it at the front in the presence of the tankmen. Inside the dough there was a roast duck, and inside the duck a pint of vodka. "Do you realize what this thing represents?" said Commissar Kharchenko on that occasion. "It shows a profound love, a loyalty which cannot be expressed in words. There is only one way of honoring such gifts—by victories at the front." Then he added more gaily: "As to the old farmer from the Ural, let him be assured that for each duck in aspic, there will be a hundred Nazis frozen to death."

The KV tanks went into battle. All day long they fought in the environs of a big inhabited place, wiping out the man-power of the enemy which tried several times to counterattack. The tankmen showed particular skill in "ironing" out the German infantry entrenched in the snow. The fascist riflemen and machine gunners had a hard time trying to escape from our onrushing tanks. They sank into the snow as into deep mud: no sooner did they get one leg out than the other stuck in, leaving them a helpless prey to our steel Mammoths whose mass of fifty tons pressed the fascist vermin

through the layer of snow into the ground.

The Commissar's tank, led by our best driver, Konstantinov, set the example. In the heat of the battle, a heavy German shell hit the tank's turret from the left, stunning and slightly wounding the gunner, Kustov, and the radio operator, Vedishchev. To keep up the barrage on the target, a big dugout, the Commissar himself sprang to the gun and with a few well-aimed shots silenced the German battery which obstructed our movement.

After the preliminary gun duel, the tanks supporting the infantry assaulted the strongly fortified enemy line. It was necessary to urge the infantrymen not to lag behind and to capture the enemy fortifications at any cost. Commissar Kharchenko opened the upper hatch of his tank and called out to the men: "Forward! Follow us, brave soldiers! Death to the fascist vermin!" As these inspiring words resounded over the field, one of the enemy shells crashed against the leading tank. The hatch was immediately slammed down, and the tank rushed forward. Seeing that their Commissar had begun the decisive assault, the infantrymen rushed behind the four powerful land battleships with a thunderous "Hurrah!"

Twenty minutes later, the battle was over. Our tanks were moving unmolested along the German trenches and dugouts, while our infantrymen used their bayonets to finish off the few resisting Nazis.

"That's the kind of tankmen we like!" the infantrymen expressed their enthusiasm about the bravery of their comrades during the lull that followed.

"That's the kind of infantrymen we like!" the tankmen returned the compliment.

"And what a wonderful Commissar! A real hero!" came from all sides. The operation of the two arms had in fact been perfect.

The tanks left the battlefield and returned to their assembly point for repairs and replenishing their fuel and ammunition. I noticed that the head tank moved slowly and drowsily, and that the Commissar's jovial face failed to appear above the open hatch. No one at headquarters liked the slow pace of the tank. "What's happened?" we cried out, unable to stand it any longer, and ran out to meet the machines. But our questions were drowned out in the roar of the motors, like the twitter of birds in a storm. The machines stopped and there was a moment of silence. From all the haunches tankmen

emerged. They were removing their leather helmets, when the words of one of the commanders resounded sadly in the dusk: "Comrades! Our Commissar is dead." Our hearts stopped beating, tears glistened in many eyes. . . . I saw men who had braved death crying like children.

Commissar Kharchenko was killed by a shell while he addressed the infantrymen from the open hatch urging them not to lag behind. The words "death to the fascist vermin" were his last ones. He was already dead when he led his men to the assault. They saw how the Commissar's snow-white tank rushed like a hurricane deep into the line of German fortifications smashing everything in its path. Inside the tank was Kharchenko's inanimate body, but he had come to life again in the spirit of his troops. Konstantinov realized that no one knew of the Commissar's death—that the men thought they were fighting under his leadership. Gritting his teeth, the driver hurled his machine bearing the body of the Commander into the most dangerous spots. The rest of the tanks followed, and their clan was so irresistible that soon only ruins were left of the German line.

The heroic Commissar was buried that evening. At his open grave, Battalion Commander Maximov urged his men to take ruthless revenge on the Germans for their beloved Commissar. "I have lost my best assistant, the Commissar. But I am convinced that he succeeded in imparting some of his remarkable character to every one of you, and that you will prove this in the coming battles."

"I swear to emulate our Commissar!" Driver Konstantinov stepped forward and pronounced these words in a stern and solemn voice.

A triple salvo was our last salute to the Commissar. . . .

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

"TROPHY" AND THE LOSS OF NO. 512

OUR KV tanks tore into the village, amidst the crackle of rifles and machine guns and the explosions of hand grenades. Two or three houses in the center of the village which the retiring Germans had set on fire, were blazing brightly. Huge flames dancing in the wind licked the heavy hoar-frost from the near-by poplars.

Speeding by the burning houses, Tank Commander Kalinichev thought for a second: "The Germans themselves should be in the place of these poplars so that the flames could kiss them till their eyes burst. . . ." Then the commander's gaze was once again

directed forward along the smoking street, toward the alleys where certain stubborn Fritzes were still moving about and offering resistance. Now and then he commanded his driver, Dormidontov, to stop and send a shell into a stone cellar where Germans were concealed, thus transforming it into their tomb.

The tanks raced about playing havoc with the enemy. Excited by the battle the crews saw only the German grenade throwers and anti-tank batteries—targets to be hit and smashed relentlessly, without mercy. . . . Suddenly, amidst this raging sea of fire and death, driver Dormidontov noticed an enormous and beautiful dog, a pointer, rushing about from house to house. As though he were being baited he ran now into the empty houses, now to the nests of the maddened Germans. "I'll make him jump with his paws upwards," exclaimed machine-gunner and radio operator Shishkov, taking aim. "What's the matter with you?" cried Dormidontov, giving Shishkov an angry poke in the ribs. "Are you out of your mind? That's a dog, not a fascist."

Shishkov stopped, lowering his gun, and the rattling burst that followed cut down two Nazi grenade-throwers who happened just then to jump out from behind a corner. "There are your dogs, you can shoot them," said Dormidontov cheerfully, without taking his eyes off the observation slit.

The battle began to subside, but the copper-coated dog still ran along the streets of the village sniffing the corpses of the fallen Germans. He had lost his master.

Now the battle was over, the village was ours. At the first opportunity, Dormidontov asked the commander's permission to "get out to have a look at that dog." Twenty minutes later, at the entrance of the house where we were quartered, Dormidontov appeared with the great coppery dog who obediently followed him. The tankmen gave him a gay and noisy reception:

"Some prisoner you've got there, Eugene!"

"Here, 'Fritz,' here!"

"Sit up, 'Copper,' beg!"

The pure-bred pointer, despite his seemingly enormous strength, actually behaved as though he felt himself a prisoner. There was a frightened expression in his restless eyes. Apparently Dormidontov had managed to gain the dog's confidence, for the animal kept close to him and cast suspicious glances at the other tankmen. The driver stroked the dog and with a gesture invited him to sit down beside him. The pointer obediently lay down, but continued to show signs of fear. From time to time his satini-

smooth nervous body shuddered and he turned his big head abruptly toward the noisy crew. He kept his flappy ears close to his head and his enormous lips turned back to show his dazzling sharp white teeth. The well-fed creature shone from the tip of his ears to the tip of his tail.

"This is a German dog, boys," said Dormidontov. "Here's his number and description on his collar."

"He belongs to some officer, no doubt," said one of the boys.

"I suppose so," said Konstantinov. "His dirty dog of a master is lying somewhere in the gutter, while his noble dog is with us, sheltered from the cold."

Everybody laughed. "True, and it was I who saved his life," said Dormidontov. "Shishkov was about to kill him off with all the other dogs."

The tankmen cast reproachful glances at Shishkov. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Shishkov. Such a nice dog, and you took him for a fascist. . . ."

"And that's why I'm going to take care of this dog," Dormidontov went on. "The commander gave me permission to keep him in the battalion."

"Well, let's give him a name," said someone. From all sides came suggestions: "Fascist," "Gangster," "Hitler," "Adolf," "Goebbels," and so forth.

"None of these will do, boys," Dormidontov interrupted his friends. His eyes flashed gaily as he drawled in a mock reproachful tone: "Comrades, is it really proper to give such a name to a dog? Why insult an animal?"

His words were drowned out in a loud burst of laughter.

"Then what name shall be given him?" insisted the tankmen.

"Well," said Dormidontov, "we took the dog along with other German war materials. He's one of our trophies. Let's call him 'Trophy.'"

Several months passed. Trophy became inseparable from the battalion. He quickly grew accustomed to his new name. He was particularly attached to Dormidontov, and when the jolly driver was away with his group, Trophy visibly missed him. All the tankmen became fond of the big pointer. They especially appreciated his good manners. He never bothered anyone for food until the regular meal hours. At dinner time, he accompanied his master to the field kitchen and ate what he was given out of a soldier's tin can. During the periods of Dormidontov's absence, Trophy walked alone to the kitchen and the cook fed him.

He richly deserved his daily bread. Trophy accompanied the tankmen on

patrol duty, ran around the tanks, looked under them, made short excursions, sniffed and listened and tried to discover the presence of strangers. "A useful animal," was the tankmen's verdict.

One day someone teasingly remarked that the dog might someday take it into his head to run back to the German lines. Dormidontov took this warning seriously, and began to train the dog intensively. In a short time, Trophy learned to carry reports from headquarters to the tank group. He could also carry machine-gun ribbons and rifles.

"But you wouldn't dare to send him for your dinner," Dormidontov's comrades teased him. "He could never resist the temptation. He'd eat it up."

TROPHY'S attachment and fidelity to his master grew from day to day. On his way to battle, Dormidontov would take leave of the dog, shaking his paw, stroking him, giving him a lump of sugar. When all five tanks of the group returned from battle to the base, Trophy would jump up to meet them, always racing directly to Dormidontov's tank. "Trophy, old man, come here," Dormidontov would call from his hatch. In one bound, the dog would be on the tank, sticking his nose into the opening and rubbing it against Dormidontov's helmet and his almost unrecognizable sooty face. One day, when his comrades reiterated their doubts as to the dog's ability to bring him his dinner, Dormidontov said firmly: "I'm going to send him. In ten minutes he will be back with my dinner pail." And he was right. The dog brought his meal intact. The tankmen were as enthusiastic as little children over this display of trustworthiness.

Meanwhile, the battles grew fiercer and fiercer. Dormidontov's tank sometimes was away for two or three days, and on such occasions Trophy was restless and worried. Several times he ran away to the front lines, but failing to find his master returned, gloomy and hungry. Only once did he succeed in breaking through to the battle line, during a violent tank fight. Our crews saw him running in confusion amidst violent explosions and careening tanks, and finally making his way toward the German lines. For five days he failed to appear. The boys thought that he had been killed or that he had returned to the Germans. But Dormidontov refused to believe that Trophy had betrayed him. He was so obviously depressed by the dog's disappearance, that his comrades, al-

though their tongues itched with the desire to make jokes about a "deserting Trophy," refrained from doing so in order not to hurt his feelings.

Suddenly, the dog returned. He came back covered with mud and limping. His legs were bleeding from having waded through melting ice. "Poor Trophy," said Dormidontov, embracing his dog with tears in his eyes. Trophy only whimpered and wagged his tail, pressing himself close to his owner.

"It's luck that those devils didn't eat him up," someone said.

A few days later, Trophy's wounds healed and he was ready once again to carry out every order of his master.

ONE night, an urgent call came ordering all five of the KV tanks to go to our advance positions. The crews rushed to their machines, started the motors and waited for the command to go into battle. As usual, Dormidontov found time to say good-by to his dog. The other members of the crew, Kalinichev, Shishkov, Solovyov and Pisarev, also said kind words to Trophy. The dog realized that they were his master's closest friends, and showed more regard for them than for the other crews. By now Trophy was known as the "sixth member" of Dormidontov's crew.

The tanks were being sent up to prevent the Germans from recapturing a recently lost position on a river. They had launched a powerful attack. After two hours of fighting the enemy withdrew. The five KV tanks fought like lions. Kalinichev's machine which bore a large number 512 on its turret aroused general admiration. Skillfully driven by Eugene Dormidontov, it executed the most difficult manoeuvres, attacking the Germans from the flank and from the rear. Its crew had long been famed for their skill in smashing German guns and mortars, without damaging their own caterpillars.

In this battle, too, Dormidontov cracked the German emplacements by sudden raids. His tank smashed over a dozen German medium guns and mortars. When the pursuit of the retreating enemy began, he raced far ahead. . . .

After the battle, Kalinichev's tank driven by Dormidontov failed to return. Trophy desperately sniffed every other tank, but he could not find his master. Dormidontov had remained somewhere on the battlefield. As the hours went by the commanding officer and the returned crews grew more and more concerned over the fate of his tank. It could not be found anywhere in No Man's Land.

"They surely went too deep into the enemy lines, and were disabled," the Senior Lieutenant said gloomily.

Twelve hours passed, and still nothing was heard of Kalinichev's machine. A few scouts sent to reconnoiter as far as the German advance positions failed to discover any trace of it. Someone in the battalion suggested sending Trophy. "He'll recognize it from a distance, and the Nazis won't touch him because of the German badge on his collar," he said.

Early in the morning, before sunrise, Trophy was brought near a track made by one of the tanks and let loose. Apparently he had been waiting for just this moment. The intelligent animal bounded forward as though he understood clearly what was wanted of him. A few hours later, he returned to the assembling center. He seized the first tankman he met by his overalls and began to drag him toward No Man's Land. "He's found them, he's found them," exclaimed the tankmen admiringly.

Scouts Valin, Arovsky and Malchenko followed Trophy to the advance positions. The dog passed them and continued straight on toward the German lines, whence came bursts of rifle and machine-gun fire. It was dangerous to proceed, but Trophy moved stubbornly forward. If he advanced a few steps and saw that our men were not following him, he returned with an angry bark and tried to drag them after him. Our boys decided to move ahead cautiously. They crawled through the bushes, still led by the pointer. Suddenly the dog stopped, squatted, put his front paws on something black and turned his head toward the scouts. When they approached, they found the body of a Soviet tankman. It was Vanya Pisarev, Kalinichev's gunner.

"Poor Vanya, how did you get here?" whispered one of the scouts sadly. Pisarev's body was riddled with bullets. In his pockets there were some papers, the notebooks of all the crew. Apparently he had tried to make his way back to our lines to inform us of the position of his tank and had been killed by the Nazis while making the attempt. "Is the rest of the crew alive? Where are they?" the scouts wondered. They examined the notebooks found on Pisarev. But they found no answer to their question.

Among the papers was a large leatherette pocketbook belonging to Dormidontov. Trophy, who restlessly sniffed at every new object drawn out of Pisarev's overalls, suddenly jumped at this pocketbook and roaring fiercely, ran on, heedless of the scouts who tried to call him back. He kept the precious object in his formidable jaws and, after making a few circles, rushed off toward the German lines.

"Where is he going? He must have lost his mind!" exclaimed Arovsky.

"Don't you see? He is surely following Pisarev's tracks. He'll find the tank now," said Malchenko confidently.

Our scouts took cover and decided to wait for developments, but a few minutes later they were noticed by the Germans who opened fire. They were forced to withdraw. An hour later, Trophy appeared with the same pocketbook in his jaw. He put it down in front of the scouts and stood as if petrified. The scouts opened the pocketbook and to their great joy found a fragment of a note signed by Kalinichev: ". . . Even a little bit. Maybe through Trophy. We are still alive. Using up the rest of our ammunition. Have killed about a hundred of the beasts. Will not surrender."

The tankmen remembered that Trophy had been trained to carry cartridges and rifles, as though Dormidontov had foreseen the present plight of his crew. The scouts got a machine-gun ribbon from the infantrymen, wrapped it up in a rag and put it in Trophy's jaw. The dog without hesitation raced in the direction of his own tracks.

The bold and intelligent pointer made three more trips with ammunition. We computed that the disabled tank was about three kilometers behind the enemy lines. From his third trip, Trophy returned with his skin singed in spots and with a note attached to his collar. "Dear comrades: Thanks to you and to Trophy. There's a dog for you! He helped us kill another four dozen of the bloody German dogs. Good-by, boys! These are our last minutes. They're pouring gasoline over us. We are going to die, but we know that our country will win. Send our greetings to our families. We are dropping Trophy through the lower hatch. He will get through. Good-by." The note was signed by Kalinichev, Dormidontov, Shishkov and Solovyov.

A WEEK later we pushed the Germans back and occupied the place where tank No. 512 had been disabled. Both its caterpillars were smashed. The Germans had poured gasoline over it and set it on fire. Thus perished the heroic crew of one of the KV tanks which traveled from the Ural to Staraya Russa, and with it Eugene Dormidontov, the favorite of the whole battalion.

Today, there rises like a black rock on the battlefield the steel tomb of the four heroic tankmen. Our soldiers often visit it. Baring their heads, they grieve for their fallen comrades and honor their exploits. On all these visits they are accompanied by Dormidontov's friend, Trophy, now the pet of all the tankmen.

A TIME *for* GREATNESS

III—Our “Explosive Idea:” Equality

by Herbert Agar

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WE have seen that the world revolution in favor of barbarism has forced every issue. The revolution has proved to us that we must accept high seriousness or see our land become booty for the modern pirates. It has proved that we must put first things first, serving our moral and political ends and subordinating our economic machinery to that service. It has proved that we must each play a more creative part in the political life and thought of our communities. Above all it has proved that we must return to our old knowledge that there are such forces in the world as good and evil.

In the dark days of moral relativity through which we have been moving it seemed that we might never recapture a clear sense of either of these forces. Everything was murky, and uncertain, and therefore infirm. It was this which explained the neurotic inability of the great Western democracies to make decisions. One by one they were forced to the edge of the destruction, or over the edge, by inferior Powers which knew what they wanted. For a time the spinelessness seemed incurable. The free men of the West began to doubt themselves on two fundamental grounds: they doubted whether they were willing to fight as ferociously as the barbarian fights; they doubted whether they had anything clear and precious to fight for. If either of those doubts had prevailed, the rich democracies would all have died self-slain.

Great Britain saved us from one of the doubts. The other is temporarily laid to rest, but it could rise again to haunt us even after victory unless we

face it while still in the mood of seriousness which the war imposes.

When the Belgians laid down their arms in May, 1940, the citizens of what Hitler calls “the corrupt pluto-democracies of the West” must all have known a moment of unpleasant wonder. The record was not good: twenty years of refusing to make decisions; finally a decision was forced upon our side, and a supposedly good army surrendered almost at once. Could it be that we had been halfhearted and muzzy-minded for so long that we had lost even our physical strength? Hitler had claimed for years that the “plutocratic democracies” were soft and money-mad, lost to honor and incapable of sacrifice. He repeated the story so often, and there was such confusion of purpose among us, that when Belgium toppled like a house full of termites we began to wonder whether the story could be true. Had freedom ruined us? Had the century and a half of economic expansion left us mere mercenaries?

We soon learned that these fears were groundless. Great Britain—a pioneer of free institutions in the modern world, and the first home of industrialism—showed that a plutocratic democracy was at least able to suffer and to fight. The Belgian defeat might have led to one of the great routs in history. The British armies faced destruction. Unprotected from the air and attacked by superior forces on three sides, there was nothing behind them but the sea. If they had broken, the morale of our

remaining free world might have broken with them. If they had been the men Hitler thought, they would have been slaughtered in panic, or they would have surrendered to live and make money another day.

Yes, they fought their way valiantly across that impossible country, and the navy of a “corrupt democracy,” which by this time had air support, ferried them home—helped by thousands of the plain people, the “little men” who so often had been unable to participate in time of peace, but who found their place in war. . . .

What can be said of those Britishers who saved our world from becoming demoralized? Since Hitler has called them mercenary, it is fitting to apply to them the lines written for the little professional British army which retreated from Mons in 1914:—

These, in the day when heaven was
falling,

The hour when earth's foundations
fled,

Followed their mercenary calling
And took their wages and are
dead.

Their shoulders held the sky sus-
pended;

They stood, and earth's founda-
tions stay;

What God abandoned, these de-
fended.

And saved the sum of things for
pay.

Yet it is not enough for us to know that the rich democracies, so long weakened by doubts and indecisions, can breed men who are able to fight. This might be proved on any number

HIGH LIGHTS of
the NEW BOOKS

of lost battlefields, and in noble retreats: the world would still be destroyed. We must match the enemy in his singleness of purpose, in his exact knowledge of what he is doing and why he is doing it. "To the compactness of their religion of darkness," says *The City of Man*, "the rulers of France and England had nothing to oppose but a dim Hamlet-like glow. . . . It implied the conviction that no conviction is worth fighting for and that the boundaries between good and evil had fallen. Military defeat was the outcome of moral abdication."

We have rediscovered that the boundaries between good and evil are real: we know today that many things are worth fighting for; but still we have no simple clear faith as to what we intend to do if we attain victory.

For the time being the need for such a faith is diminished by the fact that the enemy has made his own plan clear, and that it is an unpleasant plan. The Axis is fighting for plunder. It is fighting to seize power in order that it may enslave the bodies and steal the goods of the rest of the world. If the Axis were to win, for so long a time as it could prop up the technological remains of the civilization it had ruined, the booty would be very great. For a while the war might seem to our enemies to have been well worth fighting. At least they know what they want. And at last we too have learned what they want. It is not a complicated lesson. The whole thing was put in a few words in a Japanese broadcast by Radio Tokyo, picked up in Washington and recorded by the FCC: "The outbreak of the Greater East Asia war may be said to be the beginning of the fight to put an end to Britain and America."

Having learned that much of our lesson, we know that we are fighting for our lives, which is an adequate motive for all-out work. But whenever the tide turns in our favor our lives will seem less endangered, and we might lose a war which our armed forces had won for us by a further "moral abdication." Since this is a revolt against civilization itself, victory cannot be made secure until civilization is revitalized. This demands that we work out a faith which all men can understand and which most men accept. Only with that final weapon in our hands can the powers of darkness be beaten.

Shortly after the last war C. E. Montague described the mood of the world as follows: "The total number of policemen on a racecourse is always a minute percentage of the total num-

ber of its thieves and roughs. The bad men are not held down by force: they are only bluffed by the pretence of it. They have got the tip now, and the plain man is dimly aware how surprisingly little there is to keep us all from slipping back into the state we were in when a man would kill another to steal a piece of food he had got, and when a young woman was not safe on a road out of sight of her friends.

"The plain man, so far as I know him, is neither aghast nor gleeful at this revelation. For the most part he looks somewhat listlessly on, as at a probable dog-fight in which there is no dog of his. A sense of moral horror does not come easily when you have supped full of horrors on most of the days of three or four years: sacrilege has to go far, indeed, to shock men who have seen their old gods looking extremely human and blowing out, one by one, the candles before their own shrines. Some new god, or devil, of course may enter at any time into this disfurnished soul. Genius in some leader might either possess it with an anarchic passion to smash and delete all the old institutions that disappointed in the day of trial or fire it with a new craving to lift itself clear of the wrack and possess itself on the heights. . . . Persistently sane in his disenchantment as he had been in his rapture, the common man, whose affection and trust the old order wore out in the war, is still slow to enlist out-and-out in any Satanist unit."*

Not long after those words were written in Manchester, Hitler in his jail was getting ready to show what could be done in the way of Satanism with man's "disfurnished soul." That twisted genius was writing the book in which he poured forth his plans for filling man with "an anarchic passion to smash and delete all the old institutions." As Hitler himself wrote, the passion which he was to inspire must be met with an opposite passion, and not merely with force. He said that the revolution he intended to make could never be beaten by armies and navies alone; it could only be beaten by someone who also brought against it an "explosive idea."

Hitler knew that he would let loose in the world the anarchy of pure force. His instinct told him that there was no one left on earth who believed devotedly in a great idea, and who could therefore oppose that force. Power and piracy are simple dynamic aims with an immense appeal to the

darkest places of the heart. They turn loose energies that will not flag so long as the power continually expands and the booty is unexhausted. No one can stand against those energies who is defending a half-held faith. A world of relative values and undiluted rationalism can never stand against a world of absolute values and headlong emotion. Power and piracy are absolute values. They breed strength of will. The fact that they are Satanic values does not diminish their force; it means only that they are uncreative, that in their triumph they can do nothing but demolish.

GREAT forces can only be countered by forces equivalently great. The power of Satanism is enormous. The appeal to the wild beast of destruction lights fires in the human soul and gives wings to the will. The armies of Lucifer, which almost shattered heaven, have never been contained in hell. They range the earth, seeking to spread the empire of chaos. Once the walls of the world are breached, once civilization is destroyed anywhere, the strength of the enemy grows because his hopes are high. When the Germans showed it could be done, the Japs followed. There will be other defections unless our side rallies its full spiritual strength by giving clarity and beauty to the cause of the human race. Virtue cannot expect to win merely because it is virtuous, but only if it acquires an implacable will that evil must perish. Such a will cannot be merely negative. It is not enough to know that cruelty and persecution are bad. We all knew that; yet we all watched for ten years with stony eyes while cruelty and persecution destroyed our brothers by the thousands and later by the hundreds of thousands. Justice and kindness must be passionately desired, we must have clear plans for bringing them to life and we must cherish the thought of making the plans come real, before we can match the will-power of the soldiers of doom.

Perhaps we could win a military decision by numbers and manpower alone, without bothering about moral aims. That would depend in part on how many people went over to the enemy as the fight dragged on. But nobody will go over to the enemy, ever, if we see our "explosive idea" with precision, present it to the world with eloquence, serve it as men serve what they love. If we win the war in the name of this idea, and mean what we say, the war will stay won.

We can make no plans for the future that do not express the spirit of our civilization. Plans in a void, plans that are not related to a way of life, are meaningless. Since the spirit of

**Disenchantment*, by C. E. Montague. New York, 1922.

our civilization is noble, the plans that would implement it are noble also. The question is whether we are good enough to fulfill this inheritance.

Driven back to first principles by the sight of the destruction of his great country, Saint-Exupéry wrote: "It was the contemplation of God that created men who were equal, for it was in God that they were equal. This equality expressed an unmistakable significance. For we cannot be equal except we be equal in something. The private and the captain are equal in the Nation. Equality is a word devoid of meaning if nothing exists in which it can be expressed.

"This equality in the rights of God—rights that are inherent in the individual—forbade the putting of obstacles in the way of the ascension of the individual; and I understand why. God had chosen to adopt the individual as His path. But as this choice also implied the equality of the rights of God 'over' the individual, it was clear that individuals were themselves subjected to common duties and to a common respect for law. As the manifestation of God, they were equal in their rights. As the servants of God, they were also equal in their duties.

"I understand why an equality that was founded upon God involved neither contradiction nor disorder. Demagogy enters at the moment when, for want of a common denominator, the principle of equality degenerates into a principle of identity. At that moment the private refuses to salute the captain, for by saluting the captain he is no longer doing honor to the Nation, but to the individual.

"As the inheritor of God, my civilization made men equal in Man."

These lines are a sermon on the central idea of Western civilization—the only idea upon which we can build a future. Either we express in our daily lives enough of this idea to give our world nobility, or the greatest of civilizations will go down before the eternal barbarian because the men of the twentieth century were not good enough.

Saint-Exupéry points out that from this same idea comes the respect for all men which our civilization has tried to affirm. It is only when a man can respect his neighbor that he has a chance to respect himself. He can respect his neighbor when he sees each man on earth as an ambassador of God. "Thus the love of God founded relations of dignity between men, relations between ambassadors and not between mere individuals." Similarly, the brotherhood of man derives from the same idea which establishes the equality of man. "Men were brothers in God. One can be a brother

only in something. Where there is no tie that binds men, men are not united but merely lined up." Saint-Exupéry derives charity from the same idea. Also hope. "Since it made each of them the ambassador of the same God, in the hands of each rested the salvation of all. No man had the right to despair, since each was the messenger of a thing greater than himself. Despair was the rejection of God within oneself."

Despair is also the prison in which man is doomed to live when he makes the rejection. The fires of hell are a faint symbol for the discomfort of this prison. In a world that has no meaning, fate is a cold enemy, giving man hopes that must be thwarted, desires that cannot be appeased, dreams that are made true after years of work and then killed by callous accident. And all for what? When man has grown too sophisticated to believe in the central affirmation of his civilization he can never again find an answer to that terrible question. In a world that has no meaning, the sorrow at man's heart cannot be relieved. . . .

IN such a world there are only two methods of escape, two ways to assuage the pain that is unbearable because it has no dignity, because it relates to no principle. One is the path of triviality and cynicism. The other is the wild destructiveness, the anarchic passion to smash, which C. E. Montague foresaw as the possible end of modern history. Both ways are neurotic. One suggests the spoiled favorite of fortune, the other the bully gone berserker. We see them both today. One is the negative barbarism of a civilization turning soft; the other is the active violent barbarism which has already given so many great nations their *coups de grâce*.

Neither method of escape is a success. The first leads to the second, and the second leads to death. Both are neurotic responses to the long disease which has afflicted our culture: the loss of a fixed central faith which we know to be good and which we insist on practising. The question of the hour is whether such a faith can be restored.

We no longer need to argue that the faith is needed. Before the present collapse there were many who believed that rationalism plus economic progress was enough, that men would use their wits to win for themselves more and more of the comforts and pleasures of life and that in so doing they would somehow grow kinder and more wise, better citizens of the brave new world. Those who believed this

unlikely story were irritated at the suggestion that man needed a faith around which to integrate his civilization. They seemed to feel, uneasily, that faith was a dangerous concept and that if it were admitted it might interfere with the production of automobiles. We now know that lack of faith can interfere grievously with the production of automobiles, or at least of pleasure cars. We now know that man can, and does, turn upon himself and tear his world to bits in the desperation that arises from his lack of belief in anything noble. Yet all the time the tradition on which our Western world has rested contains an answer to man's great need. In our darkest hours we are inclined to remember the answer, as Saint-Exupéry did as he mused on the death of France. Twenty years sooner, a few thousand Frenchmen with the same conviction might have persuaded the whole world not to go mad. If we unite today in the name of our great idea, and win a second chance, shall we remember in twenty years' time that it is not "visionary" or "impractical" to talk about faith? Much will depend on America, a country which has a special part to play in upholding and illustrating the faith.

The idea of equality, which is deep in the American mind, is the idea which brings together most fully our political and our moral tradition. As Saint-Exupéry says, men cannot be equal unless they are equal in something. To the mind of our Western world it is natural to think of men being equal in God—not only equal before God, in the eyes of God, but equal *in* God, in the divine spark which gives abiding value to the individual soul. This concept "forbade the putting of obstacles in the way of the ascension of the individual." A whole set of political systems has arisen in the effort to make real this idea of equality which man, in the Western world, has always desired. Our religion has recommended it and our politics have often promised it. Yet it has proved a mirage.

It remains, nevertheless, a deep and passionate desire. It satisfies a religious and secular yearning at the same time. It fulfills the Christian idea and the democratic idea. It could even lend moral value to that striving for mechanical perfection and mastery which is characteristic of our world; for the marvels of technology, if used to serve the idea of equality, would truly come into their own.

A world where equality was accepted and served would be democratic necessarily. It would be free necessarily. It would be without race

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prejudice, and obviously without class oppression. No such perfection will be found on our disorderly earth; but to whatever extent we make the concept of equality come true, to the same extent we fulfill many of our deepest political and moral ambitions. In this concept, with its religious sanction and therefore with its implication of equality of duties as well as of rights, we have the "explosive idea" with which the human race can stand up and fight the Axis. The idea is simple. It is dynamic. It can move the heart to a mystic joy. And America seems in a special way to be the guardian of the idea, because in the preamble to our first state document we already dared to talk of truths and privileges which were applicable to "all men."

In the funeral oration for the soldiers who died in the first year of the Peloponnesian War, Pericles had this to say of Athens: "We have provided education and recreation for the spirit . . . and beauty in our public buildings, which delight our hearts by day and banish sadness." It is unusual for a statesman to give such a reason why men should die gladly for their country. Yet this recreation for the spirit, these buildings that delight the heart by day, are precisely the reason why Athens has remained a symbol for man's hopes.

It is easy to make the story of Athenian democracy sound fraudulent. It was a brief story, dark with quarrels. The life of the city rested always on the labor of slaves and of underprivileged metics. And Athens, whose writers preached moderation in such lovely language, bled herself white in an immoderate imperialist war. Yet for more than two millenniums man has looked to Athens as a sign of grace. And in matters such as this the instinct and the memory of man are always right.

The beauty of Athens was a democratic beauty because it was made for the most part by the ordinary artisans, slaves and citizens alike, doing their daily work and drawing their pay like other craftsmen. The beauty was there for everybody, just as the theater of Athens was attended by everybody. Whatever the city was able to build that was noble or great, it was built out in the open for all men to see, so that it might help to banish all men's sadness. In recreation for the spirit the Athenians strove toward equality, and therefore the human race has blessed their memory. In politics they were oppressive toward their neighbors; in economics they indulged the usual undisciplined greed; and these sins brought them

to early disaster. But in one great field of life they tried to make men's opportunities equal, and for that they earned the power to make great art in their lifetimes, and immortality in the mind of man.

It is interesting to note the difference between "equality of opportunity" in this Periclean sense and the same phrase as it is often used in America to justify the inequality of our world. Too often we use the words to mean an equal chance for the man of rare ability to get ahead in life. To whatever extent we have provided this form of equality, it is a useful feature of our social order, making for initiative and self-reliance and hope. But it is not a form of equality which can lift the spirit of man to any excitement except worldly excitement. It does not make for brotherhood, or charity, or respect for all men, or the sense that we are equal in God. In fact, if it were the only form of equality widely practised by a community, this equal chance for the gifted man to get ahead might be said to work against the moral values which Saint-Exupéry found in equality. R. H. Tawney calls it Tadpole equality.

"It is possible," he writes, "that intelligent tadpoles reconcile themselves to the inconveniences of their position, by reflecting that, though most of them will live and die as tadpoles and nothing more, the more fortunate of the species will one day shed their tails, distend their mouths and stomachs, hop nimbly on to dry land, and croak addresses to their former friends on the virtues by means of which tadpoles of character and capacity can rise to be frogs. This conception of society may be described, perhaps, as the Tadpole Philosophy, since the consolation which it offers for social evils consists in the statement that exceptional individuals can succeed in evading them. Who has not heard it suggested that the presence of opportunities, by means of which individuals can ascend and get on, relieves economic contrasts of their social poison and their personal sting? . . . As though the noblest use of exceptional powers were to scramble to shore, undeterred by the thought of drowning companions!"

It is doubtless a good thing for tadpoles to get ashore and to become frogs. No criticism is implied of those features of our society which facilitate such change. But the equality which would do justice to the American idea must go further than this. "Rightly interpreted," says Mr. Tawney, "it means, not only that what are commonly regarded as the prizes

of life should be open to all, but that none should be subjected to arbitrary penalties; not only that exceptional men should be free to exercise their exceptional powers, but that common men should be free to make the most of their common humanity. If a community which is indifferent to the need of facilitating the upward movement of ability becomes torpid and inert, a community which is indifferent to all else but that movement becomes hardened and materialized, and is in the end disillusioned with the idol that it has itself created. It confuses change with progress. . . . It is wrong in suggesting that opportunities to rise, which can, of their very nature, be seized only by the few, are a substitute for a general diffusion of the means of civilization, which are needed by all men, whether they rise or not, and which those who cannot climb the economic ladder, and who sometimes, indeed, do not desire to climb it, may turn to as good account as those who can."

When Pericles boasted that Athens provided "recreation for the spirit" for all men in the city, he was saying that Mr. Tawney's "general diffusion of the means of civilization" had been accomplished. Doubtless he exaggerated; but the statement was more true of Athens than it has been of any modern community. Yet we are the heirs to a Christian tradition which gives us more incentive to true equality than the Athenians enjoyed.

IN stern Greek choruses on the omnipotence of fate, there is little to drive man to seek to rectify the plight of his neighbor. But there was much that was noble—much, therefore, that would elevate the mind and soul. And the whole city went to the theater and heard the choruses. The Athenians received from their city a high social income, above whatever money they might make for their work. The social income was paid in beauty and in the splendid instruction of the theater. It was available for all, on equal terms. Our great cities have not failed entirely in providing such amenities. We have done much; but we have not done enough to make equality a fighting cause. The diffusion of the means of civilization, if carried far enough, would create a people so proud of their civilization, so sure of their position in it, that they would not permit it to be challenged by the barbarian. The news in each morning's paper is proof that our world failed to carry the diffusion far enough.

One reason for the failure is that we have not steadily distinguished between opportunity to get ahead and opportunity to be civilized. To be true to itself our Christian world

should aim to provide equality in both. But the second is the more important, because it concerns the overwhelming majority of the human race.

Another reason for the failure is that equality is sometimes pictured as a purely physical or mathematical question of equality of income. This frightens some people, because they feel it to be a threat, and it discourages others, because they feel it to be impossible. Presumably it is impossible: in any case it is irrelevant. It does not matter in the least that some men should make more money than others; this does not interfere with equality. What does matter is that the possession of more money should make a great deal of difference—which it need not do, and which it does not do in many Middle Western small towns. What does matter is that a man's education, and health, and life expectancy, and even many of his traditions of conduct, should necessarily be different because he has more money than his neighbors. What matters, says Mr. Tawney, "is that some classes should be excluded from the heritage of civilization which others enjoy, and that the fact of human fellowship, which is ultimate and profound, should be obscured by economic contrasts, which are trivial and superficial. What is important is not that all men should receive the same pecuniary income. It is that the surplus resources of society should be so husbanded and applied that it is a matter of minor significance whether they receive it or not."

This is not an unattainable idea. In the simpler America of a generation ago it was often attained, except for the Negro. And in many Middle Western communities it is almost attained today, except for the Negro. The exception could be overcome. And modern technology which has been allowed to destroy the natural egalitarianism of so much of American life, could just as well have been used to spread that egalitarianism—if we had put first things first. It was only necessary for us to say that this American idea, this precious American practice, was not to be taken from us anywhere, but *was* to be extended where it did not already prevail. Had we said it, we could have done it. But we allowed ourselves to be distracted from our national aim. The excitement of our technological revolutions was so great that we gave ourselves to simple enjoyment of the machine, with the result that in many places the spirit of our culture withered half away. We must now repair in a hurry what we allowed to decay over decades. . . .

In order to make the idea an offensive weapon for the army of civilization, we must give the Negro as much chance to stay alive as the white

from "A TIME FOR GREATNESS," by Herbert Agar

man; we must give the South as much chance to have an education as the North; we must give the whole world a steadily increasing chance to benefit by the resources of the planet on which we are all called to live. As Vice President Wallace said in a speech in May, 1942: "The century on which we are entering can be and must be the century of the common man. Perhaps it will be America's opportunity to suggest the freedoms and duties by which the common man must live. . . . No nation will have the God-given right to exploit other nations. Older nations will have the privilege to help younger nations get started on the path to industrialization, but there must be neither military nor economic imperialism. The methods of the nineteenth century will not work in the people's century now about to begin. India, China, and Latin America have a tremendous stake in the people's century. As their masses learn to read and write, and as they become productive mechanics, their standard of living will double and treble. Modern science, when devoted wholeheartedly to the general welfare, has in its potentialities of which we do not yet dream."

VICE PRESIDENT WALLACE is probably right in suggesting that such a change would lead to a great increase in everybody's wealth. If the standard of living of our own South were doubled, if the standard of living of India, China and South America were doubled or trebled, everybody in the world would probably be better off. But even if the rest of us were not better off physically, we would certainly be better off in our minds and souls. We would be using our resources for a high faith. By helping to build Mr. Wallace's "people's century," we would be making our country the hope and the help of the world. That is a work fit for men who have been blessed by Providence with our American good fortune. And the keynote of that work is the concept of equality.

We must not be frightened by those who say that if we begin to treat the human race as if we were all equal in God we shall suddenly find ourselves living on a diet of rice and dressed in cotton pants. The evidence is against the theory that if we respect our neighbors and treat them with justice we inevitably go broke. The evidence, in fact, is in favor of the opposite theory: that if we don't respect our neighbors and treat them with justice we inevitably lose our civilization. And the alternative to civilization is economic as well as

moral collapse. It is, literally, the economic system so unpleasantly described by Spengler as "suffering and breeding and tilling the soil."

It may take a long time to kill a civilization; but it is our lot to live at the end of such a long time. Civilization is being killed under our eyes. We can save it, and renew it, but not by behaving as if we were living in the heyday of our world when nothing that was done could weaken civilization sufficiently to make it show a crack. We and our fathers have used up the moral capital that we inherited. A selfishness, a callousness, a denial of equality in God, which would not wreck the world in 1870 would wreck it immediately today. Now we have got to justify the pretensions of our culture—to ourselves, and to our fellow men across the earth. If we succeed, we can found the world strongly again, building a new supply of moral capital to leave to our children. If they, too, choose to dissipate the heritage, the tragedy will be theirs. Our task is to give them a chance to make the choice.

"An equality that was founded upon God," said Saint-Exupéry in the passage quoted above, "involved neither contradiction nor disorder. Demagoguery enters at the moment when, for want of a common denominator, the principle of equality degenerates into a principle of identity."

These words demolish the folly of those who would abandon the concept of equality on the ground that men are obviously unequal—unequal in talents, in health, in culture and in character, and so on. The observation is true, but uninteresting. It leaves out the common denominator. Since the common denominator in this case is God, the omission is of some importance.

No one who is not daft will deny that men are unequal in their capacities. But no one who accepts the basis of our Christian tradition will deny that men are equal in the most important of common denominators, in that they are all ambassadors of the same God. As Saint-Exupéry points out, one does not humiliate an ambassador. He may be an unpleasant man, of a distasteful shape or color, and his mind may lack grace; yet he demands respect because of what he represents. This is the answer to those who tell us that it is "too much" to expect white men to treat as brothers or equals the underfed illiterate natives of some savage backwater—or even those colored peoples whose technology is advanced and whose spiritual powers might put us to shame.

OUR "EXPLOSIVE IDEA:" EQUALITY

Either the savage is a member of the human race or he is not. Either the members of the human race partake in some way of a divine principle or they do not. If they do so partake, and if the savage is a human being, either those facts are more important than the education and the habits that divide men, or they are not. Finally, either the white man is capable of disciplining himself to live up to the "common denominator" on which his civilization rests, or he is not. If not, his civilization will soon fade into the limbo where live all the betrayed creeds and abandoned ideals of the past.

We have stayed too long in the garish world which John Buchan predicted—"when life would be lived in a glare of neon lamps and the spirit would have no solitude." In that bright and ugly place it did not seem reasonable to think about God, or to stress the fact that not even neon lights can long be made in a world which has no principles. The fact, however, is now being stressed by history itself. Some might complain that it is being overstressed. Yet our world is still full of backward men and women who say that to talk of such things, even today, is to "weaken our will to win," or to "stir up dissension." What is it that they intend to "win," with this will of theirs that dares not face the facts? A war? But we are not fighting a mere war. We are fighting against a world revolution to kill civilization. It is a fight that we can never lose so long as we have a noble civilization to which we honorably adhere; it is a fight that we can never win so long as we are afraid to face the failings that brought the world revolt into being. Hitler's armies may be ground to bits by the Russians; the armies of the Emperor may drown in the South Seas; but the revolt will go on in some form until we learn to be true to our faith, or until our civilization is finally downed by the hatred of the men to whom that faith has been a hoax.

If we are to use the noble concept of man's equality as a weapon in this fight, we must be clear in our minds on the relation between equality and liberty. Some of the people who fear the "explosive" quality of our tradition like to claim that liberty and equality are inconsistent with each other. They seek to turn our civilization against itself by saying that, since the purpose of life is to liberate the spiritual energies of men in all their wealth and diversity, men must have the maximum of freedom to make of themselves what they can. Any attempt to create equality by political

or economic institutions, they add, must interfere with this freedom and must therefore be objectionable. This is a degradation of the eighteenth-century concept of liberty—a degradation of which our forefathers knew nothing.

The makers of America knew what they meant when they used the phrase, "the blessings of liberty." Those blessings, they saw, could only be obtained by a combination of civil liberties on the one hand and security on the other. Civil liberties alone, they pointed out, were not enough. They were realistic enough to admit that a promise of civil liberties by the courts is an empty gesture unless the man who receives the promise is able to stand on his own feet economically. When a man has no economic security, he is not likely to speak his mind or to practise his religion if the speech or the practice will lose him his job, or his charity, or his dole. The courts may be incorruptible; but a man does not enjoy the blessings of liberty if he has unpopular opinions and if he is afraid of losing his livelihood. . . .

Similarly, the blessings of liberty cannot be attained through security alone. Security, indeed, may well be possessed by the slaves in a flourishing slave society. The slaves on Jefferson Davis' plantation in Mississippi probably had more security during two or three decades than most workmen in the modern world. Yet they were slaves, precisely because they lacked civil liberties.

THE virtue of this analysis of liberty, in which all our forefathers seem to have concurred, is that it does not leave the economic problem unexamined. It does not conceive freedom in the purely political sense of freedom from oppression by the agents of the government, plus a share in the control of that government. It recognizes that freedom is also tied to economic security. If our fathers were overoptimistic about the ease with which security could be won by the citizens of a free society, the mistake was a natural one for an eighteenth-century American. The seemingly boundless heritage of land and other basic resources led to the belief that diligent Americans would always be able to earn their own security, so long as they were not prevented by a malicious government. It seemed that the "blessings of liberty" were far more likely to be threatened by the failure of civil liberties than by the failure of security. Today the problem is reversed. We have had a tradition of success in providing ourselves with

civil liberties, but of increasing failure in providing access to security.

It is worth noting that Mr. Roosevelt's Four Freedoms parallel the blessing of liberty as described in the eighteenth century. Freedom of speech and freedom of religion: these are the civil liberties. Freedom from want and freedom from fear: these are security. If we ever succeed again in putting the two together we shall be back with the preamble to the Constitution of the United States.

When liberty is conceived in this luminous way it is not a contradiction of equality. Liberty in this sense means not only civil and political rights, but economic rights as well. It means that the economically weak must not be at the mercy of the economically strong. And this means in turn that the economic life, like the political life, must be subject to control in the name of the general welfare. In such a world equality is not hostile to liberty, it is essential to it. Professor Tawney, as usual, has stated the matter accurately:—

"In conditions which impose co-operative, rather than merely individual effort, liberty is, in fact, equality in action, in the sense, not that all men perform identical functions or wield the same degree of power, but that all men are equally protected against the abuse of power, and equally entitled to insist that power shall be used, not for personal ends, but for the general advantage. Civil and political liberty obviously imply, not that all men shall be members of parliament, cabinet ministers, or civil servants, but the absence of such civil and political inequalities as enable one class to impose its will on another by legal coercion. It should be not less obvious that economic liberty implies, not that all men shall initiate, plan, direct, manage, or administer, but the absence of such economic inequalities as can be used as a means of economic constraint."

These words bring us back to Henry Wallace's concept of a "people's century." And that in turn brings us back to America's first proud statements about "all men." The further we explore the concept of equality the closer we come to the heart of our religious and political tradition.

If equality is not made irrelevant and impossible by being construed mechanically or mathematically, if it is taken as Saint-Exupéry took it in relation to the idea of God, there seem to be three main divisions to the concept. They are not the three parts of a whole; they are merely three ways of thinking about the whole. Each way, if pursued far enough, would lead to each of the other ways. The first is equality of opportunity. The

second is equality in access to civilization—to the amenities of life which provide what Pericles called "recreation for the spirit." The third is equality in protection against the abuse of power, whether political or economic. These ideas include within themselves democracy, freedom, and a religious respect for the divine in man.

In comparison to other people we have done much to provide such equality within our country. We have done enough to show that it is possible to do a great deal more. And we must do a great deal more at once, if we are to use successfully against the enemy the weapon of this "explosive idea." For today there is still an entire race of our fellow citizens, and an entire geographic section, living so far from such equality that the word has an almost ironic note. At least it can be made to have such a note in the minds of the enemy peoples.

While spreading equality at home, where we can act fast, we must also show that we intend to spread it throughout the world, when we have the chance, and that we intend to do this sincerely, loyally, with as much speed as possible. There is no way to give this impression abroad except to show that we understand, and mean, the religious foundation of equality. If we try to use the word as a weapon, it is either "propaganda" in the bad sense of a promise we make in order to win support, but which is backed by no change of heart, or else it is a confession of a true faith. It is a confession that we have learned that we have not been good enough, but that we still venerate our tradition and intend now to live up to it. If the confession is honest it will be believed. It is believed we have the weapon with which to win the revolution.

The beauty of the political-religious concept of equality, as a weapon with which to beat man's enemies, is that we have only to persuade ourselves that we really believe in the concept in order to put it into effect. Here is no dubious plan for imposing representative government upon all the peoples of the earth. Here is no cure-all for man's woes which must wait upon a complete economic overturning. It is not a dream for a happy future; it is a plan for a successful and honorable present.

If the white man returns to the religious basis of his civilization. . . the face of the world is immediately altered, morally and politically, because it is the white man who has recently been imposing inequality upon the vast majority of the human race. It is the white man who has conquered the world financially, and to a great extent with arms as well, and who has set himself up as a kind of

from "A TIME FOR GREATNESS," by Herbert Agar

shamefaced *Herrenvolk*. If the white man has a change of heart, the whole earth will have a change of moral climate. Similarly, the face of the world would change economically if the white man returned to his principles. For it is the white man who has made the rules whereby the use of modern technology tends to concentrate wealth and power in a few countries, and in a few districts within those countries. There is no doom attached to the invention of engines which requires that the engines must be used to subjugate the human race.

IT is strange to remember that in 1913 the whole Western world became incensed because one German shoemaker was knocked off the sidewalk, in Zabern, by a Prussian lieutenant. The man was not much hurt; but the feelings of the world were hurt. The world saw the symbol of brutality, saw the sign of contempt for man as man, and the world protested so violently that the German government almost fell. Can we imagine the humiliation of a shoemaker, the torture of a thousand shoemakers, producing such a response in 1938? Hitler would only have had to say that shoemakers were an intolerable burden imposed upon him by the Versailles Treaty, and the world would have politely turned its back.

It is even stranger to remember that not many years before the Zabern incident France was convulsed, and the Western world embittered, by a horrible injustice done to one Jew. There are men and women alive today who have never been willing to repair the friendships that were broken in debate over the Dreyfus affair. One Jew was persecuted—one Jew was unfairly jailed—and there was no peace in all of France until the injustice was revoked. Men gave their lives and their reputations to the cause because they still saw, behind the individual, the ambassador of God. After Hitler came to power Jews were hunted like animals for years, and the world was chiefly annoyed at the people who called attention to the sport. We preferred safety to civilization; so we got neither.

"I have loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore I die in exile." But Hildebrand in exile was less lonely than the man who stays at home and ignores injustice, losing his membership in the human race.

The United States would seem to be ordained to take the lead in bringing the spiritual sense of equality to the world. From the beginning we have talked in terms of "all men." There was a time when we came close

to welcoming all men. Not the chosen few, not the successful or the superior or the well-bred. But the members of the human race. The lines on the Statue of Liberty still mean much to Americans.

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to
breathe free.
The wretched refuse of your teeming
shore.
Send these, the homeless, the tem-
pest-tossed, to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden
door.

Here and there in our country, over quite large areas, we have produced the nearest approach to equality that has been seen in a society with advanced technology. We have shown ourselves that we can do better. The desire to do better is still in our hearts, if we can but unbury it in time. This is what Vice President Wallace meant when he said, looking forward to the people's century, "Perhaps it will be America's opportunity to suggest the freedoms and duties by which the common man must live."

We should be humble at the responsibility we face. The war aims of the United Nations are the historic aims of the United States. This is what we have always stood for; now the whole world is reaching toward it, as the last best hope of man. Now is the testing time for our country.

Even if we live up to the test, we must be wise enough not to expect too much, not to be discouraged because our efforts fail to make a new and shining world. At best, the people's century will not be a paradise. By admitting that our politics must be based on a firm sense of good and evil, and on a recognition of man's brotherhood in God, we do not solve the problems of reconstructing a broken world. But we give dignity and nobility to the job; we give hope to ourselves and to humanity. And to whatever extent we make equality come true we liberate the chained energies of man as they have never been liberated. Also, we escape from the confusion and the despair of the age of moral relativity.

In such a world man's woes will be related to a life that makes sense; therefore, they will not be wholly frustrating. Yet they will doubtless always be with us.

The troubles of our proud and angry
dust
Are from eternity, and shall not fail.
Bear them we can, and if we can we
must.
Shoulder the sky, my lad, and drink
your ale.

A deeply interesting drama of the strange sea war today, by the author of "Mutiny Takes the Helm."

by Michael Gallister

THE *Kungholm* fell out of convoy at noon with bad engines. At midnight, thanks to the bright moonlight, she got it: Two torpedoes hit almost as one—up forward and just abaft the bridge. Those two fish were placed just right to get everybody who was not on deck, and some who were. The tanker went under in less than seven minutes.

Greely, on his way to relieve the helmsman, was blown off the ladder and landed almost beside the No. 3 boat. Brainard and Kane, heading aft on lookout duty, picked up Greely, Riordan, the assistant engineer, and two other dark shapes tumbled in. The boat was left spinning and pitching in the vortex of empty water and oil. They sighted the captain and pulled him out of the oily muck.

The skipper had been badly knocked about, however. He muttered something about holding a course due east as the shortest run to the African coast. Then he died under the high moon; the survivors sat stunned and shocked and hurt.

The pigboat came sliding through the water, plain to see in the moonlight. An officer hailed them in good English:

"Is your Captain aboard?"

"He's dead, you murdering dog!" sang out Brainard, but in less polite words.

"Come alongside and I'll pass you some tinned food and water. Head northeast by north, a quarter north; you'll strike the Moroccan coast at sixty-eight miles."

They laid in beside the conning-towers. A couple of cases of food and a breaker of water were passed down; with ironical farewell, the sub surged ahead and melted into the moon-glow.

"Better put the Old Man over now, before he haunts us," said Riordan. "Is that you whimpering up for'ard, Sparks?"

Sparks was slow to answer. Greely sat in brain-shocked tumult; he was bare-headed and his brown hair whipped about his ears. His long, bony features were more gaunt than usual; his tight-lipped mouth was set tensely, for horror racked his thoughts. At last came response from forward.

"Aye," said the wireless man. "What's left of me. Got blown out of bed."

They put the dead captain overboard. Greely tried to think of a prayer and could not, but Brainard,

who was never at a loss for anything, repeated the Lord's Prayer and they all joined in. Then they took stock, as their roaring brains quieted.

Greely, Brainard and Kane, of the crew; Riordan and Sparks, and Hicks, chief gunner's mate. Hicks had a badly gashed head, Sparks a broken left wrist. Riordan was hurt somewhere inside—a couple of broken ribs, by the feel. Technically he was in command, but he was vomiting blood and too knocked out to take the responsibility. Sparks was just a kid.

"Greely, you take over," Riordan said, "Get the mast stepped, boys, and shake out the sail."

Then he collapsed. They made him comfortable under the thwarts, and Greely took the tiller.

"Needs must when the devil drives," said Brainard, with his hard laugh. "From a ten-thousand-ton tanker, we now become a private yacht under sail, with a quill-driver at the helm!"

"Take the command, if you want it," snapped Greely.

"Be damned to you!" retorted Brainard. "There's a compass in the locker if you can read it. Northeast by a quarter north, he said."

Greely broke out the compass while the mast was stepped and the sail run up. A gentle air came from the south, barely strong enough to ripple the boat through the heaving water.

By degrees, Frank Greely's shock departed; he reacted more quickly than most of the others. Too bad Brainard was aboard; there were a dozen men in the crew who would have made better company. He and Brainard had never got along, from the start.

Greely was a scrivener, true: He had shipped in the merchant marine to do the convoy story. He was not among the elite of war correspondents, but a mere scribbler; also, however, an A. B. Quiet, not aggressive, competent but not cocksure, he was not the type to run with Brainard. That brawny, black-browed man was a very odd fish—one of the crew, yet with a background of education and culture—a gentleman fallen to low estate, they would have called him in England.

Hicks, the chief gunner's mate and a Navy man, huddled with his bandaged head in his hands. Kane was a spry little man—"Limey," they called him, because of his cockney tongue. He helped Brainard with mast and sail, for Sparks was out of it and sat



shaking with dry sobs. Presently Kane and Brainard came back to the stroke-thwart and sat facing Greely. The moonlight was bright enough to show the face of the compass.

"Hey!" exclaimed Brainard, stooping to look. "You're heading due east!"

"The skipper set the course," said Greely. He had been thinking about this. "A hundred miles, he said, due east."

"Aye. But sixty-eight, said the Nazi, northeast by a quarter north."

"I heard you the first time. Now look, Brainard: Why did he give us food and water? Not for decency or love, you bet! I think he lied about the course. He had some reason of his own, maybe just to send us wrong. We'd better trust the Old Man rather than a Heinie."

"Bloody well say so," muttered Limey Kane fervently.

Brainard sat silent awhile.

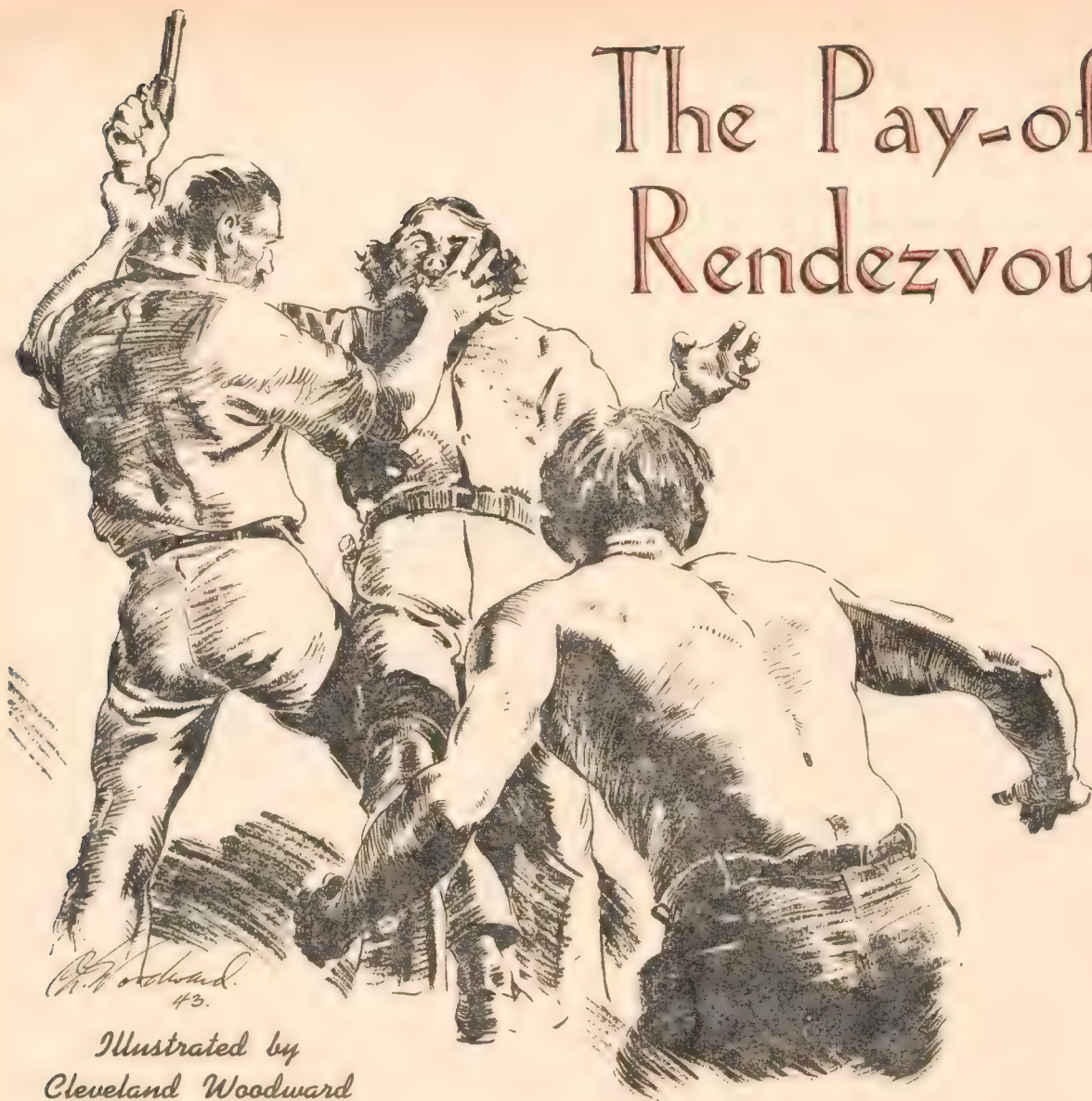
"You may be right," he said at last. "I'll turn to, for a bit."

He squirmed under the thwarts and lay beside Riordan.

"Blow me if 'e aint 'ard as nails!" Kane commented in an awed voice. "Think of 'im sleeping!"

GREELY emitted a grunt. Hard was the word for Brainard; hard and devil-driven. A man knocked down the ladder by his own follies and passions, with dark flaming eyes; a man of great knowledge but little wisdom, unpredictable in his moods, given to strange sayings afloat and intensive drinking ashore. In short, a man who had somewhere missed the boat.

The Pay-off Rendezvous



*Illustrated by
Cleveland Woodward*

The wind freshened a trifle and clouds swam up the sky like dim lost sheep upon a moonlit pasture. The bright orb dimmed and died in the west, being not yet quite at full. The heavy boat slapped and slid through gray darkness, and Kane relieved Greely at the tiller.

Greely could sleep now, and did. He wakened to a gray morning with no sun, and a fresh following breeze to accompany the unending laughter of the waves. Brainard still snored. Greely kicked him awake, sent him to relieve Kane, and looked about. Riordan was resting easy, but wanted only to stay where he was. Sparks was watching the heaving seas with terror in his eyes. Hicks was himself again, stolid and inert.

Leaving Sparks out of it in contempt, Greely got two-hour watches established—himself and Kane, Brainard and Hicks—then looked into the food-supply. The locker stores, supplemented by the Nazi's tinned meat and water, made a plentiful store. Greely anticipated trouble from Brainard, but the latter made none; he merely looked on with ironical gaze and no expression in his deeply lined features.

"This 'ere Nazi water is better'n ours," observed Kane. "What d'ye make of that, mates?"

"And Argentine meat," said Greely. "Looks like she'd been provisioned at sea, eh? Robbed some ship before sinking her, no doubt. Well, we're luckier than some I know."

"You are, anyhow," Brainard sneered. "Got yourself a good story, eh?"

Greely eyed him for a moment.

"It must be tough," he said at last, "to think of yourself alive and well, and all the good men who died last night."

Brainard flushed to his dark hair-roots. Savage fury leaped in his face; then his passion ebbed, and he made no rejoinder. Perhaps this biting response had surprised him.

No one had salvaged a thing, even so much as a razor; which, as Kane said cheerfully, simplified their existence considerably. The lack of sun was a blessing which they would appreciate if a calm befell; it was blazing hot in these latitudes.



"The Captain's dead, you murdering dog!" sang out Brainard.

"Yes, we're luckier than most," Brainard observed, nodding at Greeley as though nothing had happened between them. "Well-found and close to shore, instead of being thousands of miles from anywhere and no water; a stout boat and sail, instead of a life-raft. Not many ships I know carry sail in the lifeboats. And no navigation troubles either. And no fire last night. Why, it's a fine run of luck!"

"True," assented Greeley. "At least, so far. —Sparks, you didn't get out any call?"

"Didn't have a chance to get out nothing," said Sparks dolefully.

Greeley tried to buck the lad up, and Kane lent a hand. Hicks told tales of a girl he knew in Baltimore, and presently a regular game was going on, to banish thoughts of shipmates gone. But the boundless sea remained sword-edged and empty, until they spoke of Africa ahead.

"I seen a movie," said Hicks, "about two guys who were shipwrecked on

the Moroccan coast. They eased onto camels and found sheiks and pretty girls, and had them one hell of a time. Will we hit it like that?"

"We'll make Gambia or Sierra Leone," said Greeley.

BRAINARD uttered his hard laugh. "Africa will be what we make it, lads," said he, in pleasant mood. "Girls or camels, sheiks or wise men, what's the odds? 'Mortality weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,' as the poet says. Take your pick of desire; but give me a shady nook and a penny to put in a blind beggar's cap, and I'll give ye the rest."

Greeley looked at him in open astonishment. "What, you give any man a penny?"

"As a means of grace," said Brainard with a grand air, but accompanied the words with a sultry glance as though he had been caught unawares and resented it. "In the lands of Allah, the great virtue is charity, giv-

ing to the poor. So I expressed the hope—not that I'd be likely to do it offhand, as ye say. Why, I remember once in Egypt—"

So the talk flowed to Egypt and elsewhere; Brainard had been all over the globe and kept the ball rolling. Greeley listened thoughtfully, trying to understand the man, and could not.

With afternoon, the sun rolled out, and the green hills of water took on life as they tumbled. All hands began to miss things that were gone: Hicks, a Bible his mother had given him, though he had never looked in it; Sparks, letters from some love-sick girl; Kane, his papers and union card and discharges, and so forth. It made doleful recounting, and was sweet pain to dwell upon. But the day died, and nothing broke the horizon; with sunset, the breeze fell and the stars came clear.

They rolled that night in the trough of the recurrent seas, and the rolling was horrible. Sparks became

violently sick. He had been a blithe lad on the ship's deck, but now terror never left him. Greely comprehended that the shock must have been responsible and did his best to keep the poor fellow steady; it was lost work. Something more than his left wrist must have snapped; some balance-wheel inside had been smashed.

TOWARD morning, Greely wakened to find Sparks actually raving, and Brainard plastering him with cruel, bitter speech. Sparks flew into a blind rage. He came staggering aft, stepped on Riordan, drawing a profane howl of agony from the engineer, and hurled himself bodily at Brainard.

Brainard knocked him sprawling. Greely got between them, snatched up a tin of meat and smacked Brainard over the head, dropping him senseless, as he reached a kick at Sparks. It was a sweet mess all around, and it ended in stark horror, for Sparks staggered up and, either by intent or accident, pitched over the gunwale—and never came to the surface.

On top of this, Riordan had a touch of fever and began to talk in a queer way. He seemed quite sane, but declared that the dead skipper was haunting the boat. He wanted to get up, so Greely helped him into the bow, got him sitting there comfortably, and he became cheerful and free of pain; but he stuck to it that the captain's ghost was around, and there was something inexplicably horrible in his calm certainty. It panicked Hicks and Limey Kane.

Greely talked and shamed them into quiet, though he was a bit shaky himself and had to pretend a steadiness that he scarcely felt. Then the dawn came clear in a flat calm, and he sat meeting the steady, implacable glare of Brainard, who said nothing but looked his hatred.

"Now," said Greely in his quiet way, "since I'm in command, I'm in command, and you'd better realize it."

"You blasted penny scribbler! I'll feed your guts to the sharks!" began Brainard, then checked himself. He looked around. "Where's Sparks?"

"Dead."

That stopped Brainard like a cold douche.

"Dead!" He changed countenance, looked at Greely again. "How? I didn't do it!"

"Jumped over," said Greely. "No, you didn't do it; he was out of his head. But you didn't need to get brutal. Don't do it again, Brainard. Now I'll give you a job."

"You'll give me a job!"

"Right. No telling how long we'll lie becalmed. You take charge of the water; we've no luck now, but may have later. One mug to each man,

three times a day. We'll cut down on the ration when we begin to run short."

Brainard was astonished, but complied. Greely had picked him to keep him in pride and morale; there was nothing sly about Brainard.

The sun came up, red and hot. The waves still ran high, but they heaved sullenly like molten metal, with never a ruffle of wind. Kane and Greely made shift to stretch the sail for a shelter from the sun; the water-glare would burn them badly as it was.

Riordan had fallen silent. He answered questions laconically and seemed fit enough, but Greely had his doubts. Kane, who had twice been torpedoed, made light of this hardship, and stirred the chief gunner's mate into labored argument. The day drifted on, and apparently Riordan had forgotten his hallucinations, until, toward sunset, he let out a startling cry.

"There's a ship ahead, mates!"

They leaped up; the horizon was blank, not even a smoke showed.

"I'm not foolin' either!" said Riordan to the hot words. "The Old Man just come past and says to hold our course, there was a tanker dead ahead."

They exchanged looks, and Greely felt a little chill crawl up his spine, as they slumped down again. Brainard leaned over and fastened him with a glittering eye.

"I know what's eating at you," he said. "It's that picture you had, stuck up over your bunk; the woman with the cool eyes, and the kid. Yours, eh? That's what's hit you."

"I suppose so," admitted Greely. He had been trying not to think about the lost picture, and the two of them back home. "Yes, this voyage would have meant a lot toward getting out of debt and so forth."

"It would have meant that to you; it would have meant a hell of a lot of aviation gas to the boys in North Africa, if we'd got there," said Brainard mildly. "I suppose you had an assignment for a story, eh?"

Greely nodded. "Yes. We had counted pretty heavily on that."

"Well, you've got a good yarn, if they'll let you publish it. I got wrecked that way in the last war. I had a newspaper job then. Like a young fool, I bucked the censorship and beat it—and that finished me. And another guy skipped out with my wife. That's the penalty."

"For what?" questioned Greely, who was utterly astonished by this friendly confidence.

"For going upstream. For playing my own hand and forgetting the world. For thinking only of myself. You can't do it and beat the game. Now I'm a bum, like you and Limey

yonder." All of a sudden the man shifted to fierce recrimination. "You and your cursed assignment! You're a sap, after all—a poor pen-pushing sap. With the world in ruins, you've got an assignment! Who the hell cares? All this voyage meant to you was a book. What good are you? None. . . . Well, there's the wind coming up—let's go!"

The wind came, a stiffish air out of the north. Darkness came on its heels, as they heeled over to the thrust of the canvas and slapped the waves anew. Greely was thankful for the darkness. Brainard's angry, contemptuous words burned in him. "Who the hell cares?" True—who indeed, except that one woman? What did he matter in the world's wreck?

Yes—the voyage would have meant one thing to him, another to the Army. And, as he suddenly perceived, that was the hell of it. He had never looked at it like this until now.

SITTING at the tiller, the hooded lantern and compass at his feet, holding ever eastward, Greely for the first time got an unbiased slant on himself, and was appalled. He had been drifting, these past two years and more, earning a facile living as the world rushed past to its agony and ruin. Self-centered, living from day to day and month to month, his intelligence and skill and effort had been squandered on petty things.

Why had he gone into the merchant marine? For his own little ambition entirely. And after all, who cared? To put it the other way around—for whom had he cared? He was average in this, perhaps, average in his blindness and petty hopes; nothing wrong in it, and nothing very good in it either. A narrow horizon—and just beyond, all the ravening struggle of entire nations, including his own.

He could feel the terrible justice in Brainard's slow-gathered burst of accusation. The thing opened before him with relentless clarity. What good was he? Who would suffer if he died this night? Those other men had perished with the *Kungholm*, and the Army was the loser—the world of duty and effort and ideals was the loser.

"Assignment be damned!" he thought bitterly. "What's it worth? I'm doing two things at once and getting nowhere with either. Giving myself, for what? Not even giving myself, to be honest about it. Doing nothing for anybody. A fine life, these days!"

Something hardened in him, took shape and form, as he sat staring into the darkness. East, ever eastward; what was it someone had written about all light coming from the east?

Trite, of course; but there was a deep wisdom contained in the words.

Again, why had he been given this glimpse at himself just now, of all times? A book, write a book! The very thought was instinct with a savage contempt. Who the devil wanted books now when the earth was tottering? It all began to sweep out of his mind; the habit of years, the old trend of his brain, became dissipated. What did it matter? Penny scribblings, Brainard had truly said! Kane, doing his daily grind—Sparks, breaking and done for—such men were more important than he.

He wakened Brainard and turned over the tiller, and crawled under the thwart to fall into uneasy sleep.

Through the night, through the two-hour watches, the thing grew upon him. Toward dawn the wind fell to fitful gusts; the stars were clear and chill; so was his brain. It was nothing to talk about, merely an inward decision. If the chance came, when the chance came, whether or not the chance came—his aim must be of single purpose, and at something beyond himself and his own gain. He had made a mistake, and now he perceived it plainly. It was wonderful how his mind opened and broadened, here in the graying dawn. To think he had so long missed this greater horizon!

THE day cleared and brightened. The breeze remained fitful, slowly failing, threatening to drop into dead calm again; the eastern sky was flooding gold and crimson. Kane, perched on a midship thwart, was the only other man awake. He twisted about and then gaped at Greely almost ludicrously.

"Hey! Am I nuts, too? D'ye see it?" he broke out.

Greely nodded. "Looks like it, Limey. Can't be sure."

With only a six-mile horizon from the level of a boat, it was hard to be sure; but there it lay, a solid dot against the sunrise—a ship swimming against the glare. A ship, and dead ahead! Kane jabbed with his thumb toward the sleeping Riordan in the bow.

"Blow me if 'e didn't say so!" he exclaimed. "Just like 'e said!"

"Easy! Let 'em sleep a bit, till we make certain."

True, Riordan had prated of a ship, and a tanker; and this one was a tanker. So much became clear when the sun lifted and one could see under the glare, but Greely wasted no mind on the hallucinations of a hurt man. Tankers were many, and here off the African bulge was the ship-lane for travel to and from the Cape.

Kane came aft to the stroke-thwart and crouched there, staring. No bi-

noculars were in the boat, but as it slowly crept down toward the black object, none were needed. There was a sense of things amiss. Kane felt it too, though he said nothing. The tanker showed no smoke, and seemed to be lying motionless.

Greely's first thought, that she might be one of the convoy, disabled like the *Kungholm*, gradually died. She did not fly the convoy signals, nor any signals. She was low in the water, and as they approached she shrank in size. The boat was within two miles of her when the canvas flapped—the wind had died out. Hicks wakened, sighted the tanker, and let out a bellow; then they were all awake and staring, with a babble of tongues.

She rode without motion, a dead ship. Conjecture and surmise ran rife.

"Something wrong there!" declared Brainard with tempestuous conviction, after damning the slack breeze. "She doesn't look right. A small tanker, showing no colors."

Kane's imagination awoke. "Might be she's a Nazi ship, mates! Lying 'ere to refuel their blasted pigboats!"

Greely laughed at that. "Subs don't need to worry about fuel these days, Limey; that's a notion most people have, but it's wrong. They can stay four months at sea; the crews give out before the fuel. It's the crews that have to be renewed."

Riordan, who had been staring silently as they lifted to the top of each sea, lifted his voice gravely. His black beard was sprouting, blurring his features, but his voice bit at them all with a startled note.

"A ghost ship, that's what! The Old Man was talkin' to me last night. Sheer off her, he says. Sheer off, for there's red ruin aboard her!"

"Dry up!" barked Brainard. "Be damned to you and your ghosts; ghosts aren't solid, and can do no harm. That ship's real. Eh, Greely?"

"Real enough," Greely assented. "Break out the oars; the wind's gone for good, boys."

Sail and mast came down, lashings were cast off the oars; Greely, Kane, Brainard and Hicks fell to work.

The tanker lay idle still, but so obviously real that there could be no mistake. Her air of complete desolation, her death-like immobility, the fact that she ignored the approaching boat and showed no sign of life, indicated a derelict. On closer approach, the tokens of war became visible. Her bridge and superstructure were smashed in places and there was a gaping hole high in her bows.

"Mates!" The surprising Riordan came to life, calm and sane and without the least token of aberration. "I know that craft, I've served aboard her! She's the little old *Stanwick*, one

o' the first hydraulic tankers! All painted over. Funnels black, see? She was reported sunk last year, off Trinidad. It's her, all right."

"There's a gun-mount aft," cried Hicks, twisting around to look. "All deserted, too. See that tangle of lines over her rail, amidships?"

"Give way and stop gabbing," said Greely. "Quicker we lay her aboard the better. Then we can find what's what."

The oars rose and dipped, but tongues wagged regardless. That she had floated here from Trinidad, across the Atlantic, did not make sense in the least, and they all knew it. But no one doubted Riordan's say-so; the engineer was positive. Greely quickened stroke. They were all dead anxious now to get aboard and be rid of the boat. Coming in close, Brainard hailed, but got no response.

RUST and slime coated her, the water sucked audibly as she lifted, and everything seemed in a mess aboard her. They rounded under the stern; her name had been painted out. This did not make sense either. She conveyed an ominous, sinister impression as they made fast to the trailing lines in the waist. A Jacob's ladder was dangling with the lines, and they soon had it.

"How about it, Riordan?" demanded Greely. "Can you climb?"

"Guess so. I'm mending okay," said the engineer, rising. He mounted while they held the ladder.

Greely was in no haste. He let the others go up, then made the boat fast and followed. The other four were standing in a clump on deck, staring about, pointing out this and that—the boats were all in place, the pump-house was intact and hose-lines were connected, but more curious than all else, the forward deck was occupied by a tennis net, while several rackets and a case of balls lay on a loosely heaped tarpaulin.

"Well, Gawd bli' me if ever I seen the likes o' that!" gasped Limey Kane.

"Something funny about all this," said Greely suddenly. Everything was slovenly in the extreme, yet he was noting details. "That net's stretched tight; the rackets aren't covered. They wouldn't stay taut long in sea-air. And look—near the starboard ladder—boxing-gloves!"

Several pairs of the puffy gloves lay there on the deck.

"Everything's cockeyed," observed Brainard. "I don't like it, Greely."

"Well, I'm for looking at the black hole," said Riordan, turning.

"Wait!" Greely exclaimed sharply. "What's that?"

They all heard it, and stiffened as the voice reached them: a rusty voice hoarsely intoning some tuneless song.



Riordan had a touch of fever and began to talk in a queer way.

Hicks pointed forward where the scuttle of the forepeak stood wide open. The voice came from there. A man followed it—a frowsy, bleary figure wearing dirty slacks and shirt.

The man came on deck, yawned hugely, and stretched himself. He had long, unkempt hair and unshaven features. He turned to a canvas bucket near by, and from it doused water over his face and head. His looks and actions told their own story; he was, or had been, dead drunk, and was just coming around.

Greely gave Brainard a look, and they strode forward together, followed by the others. The man straightened up, wiped the water from his face with hairy paws, and suddenly saw them. He froze, open-mouthed, his expression of astonishment ludicrous; his bleary eyes bulged, and a question broke from him, in some language Greely did not understand.

"What ship is this, mate?" demanded Brainard.

Alarm, swift and savage, flashed in the man's face. Quick as light, his hand flashed under his shirt—but Greely, who sensed what the gesture meant, was quicker. He caught the arm as the pistol came clear and wrenched it around, tripped the holder and sent him headlong to the deck. A howl broke from the man; the pistol fell, and Greely kicked it away.

At the same instant Brainard darted to the scuttle, drew the sliding doors together, and hooked a big padlock that hung there, through the pins.

The hulking rascal came to one elbow and stared up dully at the five men. He said something, and Hicks broke into astonished speech.

"Spanish," he said in an aside; "I talk it." And he went on questioning

the man. After a bit he turned to Greely. "This is screwy, all right! They're all down below, drunk. I dunno if it's mutiny or what. Says he's the Cap'n, and there aint nobody aft at all. Now look at him! Let's see that pistol, Limey."

Kane picked up the automatic and handed it over. Hicks examined it and nodded his bandaged head.

"German, sure as shooting! Tennis net and boxing-gloves!"

He shot more Spanish at Captain Diaz, as the man had named himself, but got no reply. Diaz had become surly and silent. He came to his feet, darting vindictive looks around.

"A bad 'un, that's wot 'e is," said Kane. "Try 'im for a knife."

BRAINARD did so. Diaz scowled and cursed, but offered no resistance. Brainard took a five-inch knife, whose sheath was slung to his belt under the dirty shirt.

"Keep the gun, and watch him, Hicks," said Greely. "Tell him you'll drill him if he makes a move—and do it. We'll explore the deckhouse. Maybe you can get some information out of him if we're not around."

Hicks released the safety-catch of the pistol and began talking at the scowling Diaz. The others started for the bridge and deckhouse, where the cabins were, Riordan heading for the engine-room hatch in the starboard passage. This hydraulic tanker had no catwalk; she was different from any tanker Greely had seen.

Now began discoveries which became more singular the farther the search extended. Not a soul was found, even in the galley. Cabin stores were abundant, of the most astonishing kinds; luxuries of every

sort were plentiful. Champagne and liquors were stacked about by case lots.

Empty as the cabins were, they bore signs of very recent use: beds were unmade, playing-cards strewn about, French and English and German periodicals and books were in evidence. More sporting goods were turned up; foils and masks, handballs, punching-bags. Nowhere was any indication of female occupancy. On the once-white walls were scrawls in German script.

The bridge showed some slatternly instruments disposed in slovenly fashion; no logbooks or ship's papers. Here and there was to be found the name of the *Stanwick*, confirming Riordan's recognition of the ship. But, in the pumphouse, Greely found something significant—penciled notations on the wall, also in German, made by half a dozen different hands at different times. They noted the amounts of fuel oil drawn off from various tanks, and amounts of water pumped in to float the remaining oil. He and Brainard studied these together.

"I make it that she must be fuller of water than of oil right now," said Brainard. "That's why she's low in the water; with the tanks full of oil, she'd ride a lot lighter. And look at the date on this last notation!"

Greely whistled. "Yesterday, by the poker! Yesterday! It begins to come clear."

"What does? Not the boxing-gloves?"

"Yes. Wait till we get back for'ard. And look at this last notation again—so much oil per day drawn off. Four days in succession; that's the clue. That shows it all."

They went back forward. Captain Diaz sat sullenly in the sun, Hicks watchful beside him. The skipper would say little, he reported; there were eight men down below, all Span-ish. Kane came along with word that the wireless outfit had been smashed, obviously with deliberate intent, and was useless. Riordan showed up joyfully.

"Same old ship, same old engines!" said he. "Filthy dirty; it's a crime. But they'll run, and with a bit of help we'll manage fine. Diesels, they are."

"Well, things are plain enough now," said Greely. "This ship was run here and has been serving as a sub base for the Nazis. They took what oil they needed out of her; but her chief use was to give the pigboat crews a breather. The last sub, that left yesterday, lay here four days, probably moored alongside."

"Wot d'ye mean, the crews?" queried Kane.

"Life in a pigboat, especially in the tropics, is tough. They come aboard here and relax for a few days, putting in their time at exercise and recreation—games, boxing, fencing, anything! That's the reason for the tennis outfit."

"Glory be, you've hit it!" said Brainard. "These Spaniards are caretakers, no more. The radio's put out of commission merely as a precaution; the subs always know about where to find her. The one that left yesterday probably wirelessly her exact position to others—"

"Bli' me!" cried Kane. "Then we're liable to 'ave a bloomin' pigboat come aboard any time!"

"Right," said Greely. "That's fat to chew on. Hicks, you and Limey take this lousy skipper to one of the cabins and lock him in; then have a look at the gun aft—see if it'll work."

"Then come and lend a hand below," added Riordan, and went back to his engines.

Left alone, Brainard gave Greely a slow, intent regard.

"Well?" he observed. "You're thinking of fat salvage money."

Greely, who had found tobacco in plenty, lighted a cigarette and repaid the hard stare.

"Wrong, my hard-boiled friend," he rapped out. "I'm thinking of the sub captain who sank our ship and gave us a course to hold—a course that would take us well away from this old tub. Why? Because, no doubt, at a certain time, he would show up here himself to spell his crew."

Brainard frowned. "I don't know what you're getting at. We can run this tanker into Gambia or Sierra Leone—make those Spaniards turn to and work for us. The salvage—"

"Thinking of salvage money yourself, eh? My noble, honest, virtuous

critic!" said Greely mockingly. "Well, I'm doing the thinking for us all, like it or not."

"What's got into you? Looking for trouble?"

"Yes, and ready to meet it halfway. I'm thinking of the Old Man, and the rest who went down with the *Kung-holm*. We don't know that the next sub to show up here will be the one that sunk her; but one will come, and anyone will do."

Brainard started. "Oh! You fool, we'd just get ourselves blown to hell!"

"Not if we're smart, and I'm smart. Smart as any murdering devil of a sub commander! As you once observed, needs must when the devil drives, my friend. If we pull out of here with this ship, then what? She's been in the water for months. She's foul with weed and barnacles. First we'll have to pump out some of her tanks and get her in trim; she's too logy with water now. Then we'd make no speed at all. We've only a few days to go to reach Africa, but a sub would catch us up in no time."

Brainard nodded, and his face cleared.

"I get you. Still, you can't hope to put up any fight with this tub."

"I don't propose to. Here comes Hicks. Hi! What luck with the gun?"

Hicks was coming, radiant.

"Five-inch gun and dirty as hell, but okay," he reported. "We've located two shells for her—just two, no more."

"Then it's a gamble," said Greely, nodding. "So we've got eight Spaniards sleeping it off down for'ard, eh? Since you can talk their lingo, let's rouse 'em up. Send five to help Mr. Riordan, and you can keep the others busy cleaning your blessed cannon and the decks."

HE opened up the forepeak and went down. It was a sweet mess they found there: honest hogs would have been revolted by the place. They collected four pistols and eight knives, then kicked the owners on deck and set them to work, after a bit of sobering-up. The knives went overboard, the pistols armed Greely and his companions—and with need, for the Spaniards were a sullen, angry, vindictive lot. One of them, who was cook, was put to work in the galley and proved to know his business; by noon he had produced an excellent meal for all hands.

Over this meal Greely set forth his proposals, or rather orders, and ran into trouble. Riordan, once more in greasy dungarees, was in seventh heaven, and Hicks was blissful over his after gun. But Kane, who had been babbling about salvage money, changed his tune when he understood

Greely's intent, and Brainard was openly against it.

"We'll have to stand regular watches now," Greely was saying. "Kane and I, Hicks and you, Brainard. Leave Mr. Riordan to play with his engines. We must keep a sharp eye on these Spaniards and hold 'em at work. We must keep a constant lookout for a sub breaching or coming on the surface—"

"We can't fight no pigboat with only two shells!" piped up Kane in dismay. "We wouldn't 'ave harf a chance, mate!"

"Catch a sub on the surface with one of those shells, and the job's done," Greely said. "Hicks will answer for that. I don't propose to fight her—just murder her quick!"

"All the poorer chance, then," Brainard opposed. "She may show up from any direction; but that poop gun would only have a range of a hundred and ninety degrees."

"That's the gamble, maybe," said Greely.

"And if 'icks don't get 'er with them two shells," shrilled Kane, "we're done for, sure!"

"Correct," Greely said imperturbably.

"And bli' me, we'd lose our salvage and maybe our necks!"

"Just so."

"You've gone cockeyed all of a sudden, you and your blasted heroism!" snarled Brainard. "Our necks are more important than your silly notions of potting a sub—child's stuff, that's what it is! This is our chance to get clear with a good ship, one that'll give us a pot of money and help in the war as well. That's sense. Why risk our necks and the ship both?"

Greely listened unmoved, eyeing Brainard with his cold, thin smile.

"Afraid I'm not the guy I was a couple of days ago," he rejoined. "Your talk makes sense, but mine makes more. You're thinking a lot about your precious neck, aren't you? You can talk wide and handsome when it comes to criticizing the other chap, but you don't want to risk your easy money when it does come. We'll risk it, just the same! If we win, we have the ship, and get the sub as well."

"Who in hell wants to get a sub?"

"I do," snapped Greely. "It's my chance to do something better than just stick to my own self-centered job. I'm starting over; you can like it or not. One sub knocked out means more to the world just now than fifty ships. If we do that, and lose our own necks doing it, we've really accomplished something worth while."

"Hell! I believe you really mean it!" said Brainard, then shrugged. "Okay. Count me in. Limey, you're outvoted. Who takes the first watch, Greely?"

"You do. I'll have a word with Riordan and then turn in for a bit of shut-eye. Kane, you'd better make up on sleep, too. Take any cabin you like. And no liquor—not a drop! Understood? Until we're clear—then we'll break out the champagne."

"That makes sense, too," said Brainard, with a nod.

GREELY went down to the gratings and found Riordan making his black-gang work, with a pistol tucked under his belt. The engineer made no objections to the program.

"As ye like, Greely; count me in. I'll have these engines turning over for a trial, later on. But the Old Man said there'd be hell to pay aboard."

Greely gave him a sharp look.

"Hello! I thought you'd forgotten all that!"

"Not me. It was real. My ribs are hurting, and that's real, too. No more fever, though; I'm good for whatever comes, now," Riordan said stolidly. "These Spaniards are a bad bunch, and ripe for murder. I savvy some of their lingo. Keep an eye out."

Greely nodded, and sought the cabins, more weary than he had realized. . . .

It was late afternoon when he took over the deck with Kane. The *Stanwick* was rolling in a long, slow ground-swell, a glassy heaving sea unstirred by any wind. Brainard, who had a smattering of navigation, had been at work; a chart had been located and marked, showing that the African coast was some fifty miles distant, less than a day's slow steaming.

Keeping an eye on the Spaniards and on the water was job enough; vigilance was the price of life here. The cook seemed a willing fellow and was left at work, the others being sent below and locked in with sunset. Diaz, confined in a cabin, remained surly and somber. So came the night; and after sleep and a shave and a bath, not to mention hot food, the castaways were in good shape for whatever might come.

"And a bloody good thing, too," Kane gloomily confided to Greely as they stood watch in the morning hours. "Mr. Riordan, 'e says as 'ow the Old Man was 'ere again and tells 'im there'll be 'ell to pay aboard us, and more'n one that's alive now won't see Africa."

"You keep your mind off Mr. Riordan and his blasted ghosts," snapped Greely angrily. "You'll never see Africa, all right, if a sub comes along while you're drooling about that nonsense. Anyhow, ghosts don't talk."

"They do so!" averred Kane stoutly. "Everybody knows they do."

"If they could talk, then they could touch you and you could feel 'em,"



"I'm thinking of the Old Man, and of the rest who went down with the Kungholm," said Greely.

said Greely, amused. "They're just smoke, and smoke can't talk."

"Well, you can see smoke and you can't see talk."

"And you can hear talk but you can't hear smoke, or feel it either."

Kane pondered over this a while.

"You got me all wound up in a bloomin' circle," he complained at length, "but all the same, ghosts is ghosts and I wish we was 'eading for Africa."

"And for salvage money? Listen, Limey! The Old Man's dead, and a lot more with him; dead doing their duty, for freedom. And what've we done? Not a damned thing, except bellyache! If we do our job here, it'll help save the lives of other sailors. Why, salvage from this ship would be plain blood-money, if we didn't earn it honestly! And the only way we can do that is to take the chance given us to put one of these pigboats out of commission."

"Maybe," agreed Kane doubtfully, more impressed by Greely's vehement force and his sincerity, than by the argument.

The sun came up red upon a glassy sea of slow, heaving motion; the barometer stayed up, tokening fine weather. The surprise of the morning, however, proved to be Captain Diaz. He turned up in tow of Hicks, all shaven and dressed in clean whites, and actually smiling. Leave him at liberty on parole, said he, and he would see that the crew turned to properly and obeyed the *señores Americanos*.

"Take him up on it, Hicks," said Greely, "but listen to all that's said and don't trust him any farther than you can see him. Well, Mr. Riordan, how are the bunged ribs?"

"Not so good," confessed the engineer. "I been spitting blood again, and the hurt's come back, but I can carry on with the engines all right. I've been investigating. We've got

plenty of fuel oil and I'd like to try out those Diesels."

"Then do it. No doubt the ship changes position anyhow with the drift, so a few miles one way or the other will make no difference."

Riordan departed in gleeful anticipation. Greely, who had the morning watch, kept a sharp eye on the Spaniards, but Diaz did put them into a grinning humor. Nothing broke the glassy horizon, no smoke showed anywhere. When the propellers began to turn over, the *Stanwick* took on a semblance of life, but little more than a semblance. So sluggish was she with weed and barnacles that her best speed was no more than five knots. However, she moved, and this was cheering. During the morning, Greely got all the case liquor moved into a cabin and locked away. He had to talk by signs to the crew.

Toward noon, Brainard and Hicks showed up to take over the deck and the engines ceased. Brainard wanted to pump some of the water from the tanks, claiming to know how to use the pumps, and Greely shrugged.

"Okay by me; it'll give us some speed, perhaps, to lift her a bit. Hicks, you sure worked a miracle with Diaz! He's all smiles. Think he's straight?"

"About as straight as a corkscrew," said the chief gunner's mate. "I don't savvy half he says. These guys are Galicians or something like that, and their Spanish is some dialect."

"All right. Keep an eye on them. Kane and I will turn in and leave our cabin door open—so sing out if anything shows."

Greely heard the deckhouse pumps going as he fell asleep. It was hot in the cabin; except for the luxury of beds, he would have berthed somewhere on deck. Nor did he find slumber at once. While Kane snored, he lay wondering whether after all he might not have chosen the part of folly in not running for the African coast.

THAT appalling glimpse of himself as he was, forlorn and useless in the world's effort, had forced him to impulsive decision to make amends with this offered chance; but now a revulsion of feeling had set in. Not that he regretted the decision, but he began to doubt its wisdom. Brainard was right; it was little less than madness. So thinking, he fell asleep.

A couple of hours later he awakened, sweating. His uneasiness recurred; what had seemed a fine and glamorous action, a chance to make up for all he had not done, now showed itself as absurd and childish. He could make up in other ways. Now he had the responsibility of command, and was not justified in risking all their lives and the ship for a bit of moon-

shine. So strongly did the realization come, that he tumbled out of bed. Brainard had the right of it after all. "Bli' me! It's too bloody 'ot to sleep!"

He saw Kane sitting up and yawning, and nodded.

"Right. Run below, find Mr. Riordan, and tell him to get moving full speed ahead. I'll get to the bridge and use the steam steering-gear and signals; we're shoving off for Africa. We'll have to look after that boat of ours first."

"Ooray!" yawned Kane, jumping for his boots. "And no pig boat?"

Greely laughed. "No pigboat."

He felt relieved, now; a weight was gone. Kane scurried out. Greely was still thinking about their *Kungholm* boat, which they had left towing alongside. He slipped into his jacket, and felt the dragging weight of the German pistol in its pocket. No use carrying this thing around, he reflected; still, he might take it up to the bridge and leave it there. He had taken the pistol from his pocket, tossing it on the bed. Now he picked it up—

He jumped. From somewhere came a thin, shrill yell; it was cut short by the barking explosion of a shot. Almost at the same instant, a white shape darted into the doorway—the figure of Captain Diaz, panting, eyes blazing, a knife in his hand. He stopped short in evident surprise at sight of Greely; then he leaped, and the knife lunged.

ALL that saved Greely from that deadly blade was the fortunate chance that he was holding the pistol. At the first sight of Diaz, his startled thought was to throw off the safety-catch. He did so, and almost with the motion, pulled trigger blindly. The weapon roared and kicked. Diaz was actually upon him when the bullet smashed through the man's body and knocked him sideways.

Greely darted past. He heard another shot and another from outside. From the bowels of the ship came another. He came out of the passage by the forward deck opening; a shout burst from him. He saw Brainard there, three of the Spaniards about him, knives thrusting in the sunlight. At Greely's shout, they fell away. Brainard tugged the pistol from his pocket, his shirt bloody, and fired. One man fell; the others turned to run. Greely fired and missed.

Another shot and another came from below.

"Aft! Get aft!" yelled Brainard. "They've got Hicks!"

Greely never remembered getting aft. The two Spaniards had vanished; Brainard, cursing a blue streak, was at his heels, and panted out some-

thing about a surprise attack. Captain Diaz must have found weapons for his men.

The open after deck appeared, with the long-muzzled gun, and figures around it. One was Hicks, on his feet, gun in hand. The cook and two others lay sprawled, two dead and one badly hurt. What of Kane and Riordan, in the engine-room? No telling, yet.

When Greely and Brainard came on the run, Hicks had dropped his pistol and was holding one hand to his side where a knife had sliced into him; another had gone through his thigh and the dark blood was pumping.

"Lie down, quick!" barked Greely. "Lend a hand, Brainard— Oh, you're hurt, too!"

"Couple of slashes. Nothing much," said Brainard. "Looks like they planned to get us all at once. All right, Hicks: let's have it, now. No artery, thank the Lord!"

"Hold everything. I'll get a kit from the cabin," said Greely.

He went back to the cabins on the dead run and headed for his own, where he had seen a first-aid kit. As he reached it, he nearly ran into Captain Diaz, who was on his feet and staggering out, knife in hand. Greely fired point-blank and without an atom of pity, and leaped past the falling body. He seized all the clothes in sight, a sheet, and the kit, and then pounded back for the after deck.

As he reached it, Riordan and Kane appeared. The engineer was supporting Kane, who was stooped and staggering. Brainard seized on the kit with alacrity, working over Hicks.

"Limey's got it," yelled Riordan. "The dirty dogs jumped us—"

"I settled Diaz anyhow," said Greely. "Let's see, Limey—stretch out, now."

Kane obeyed, and Greely's first anxiety passed into relief. A badly slashed arm, gashed ribs and back and shoulder, but no mortal injury. Brainard had two deep stabs in chest and shoulder; he had been attacked without a chance to get at his gun.

Amid a babble of talk, wounds were bandaged, cigarettes were lighted. No one knew just how many of the Spaniards remained. Riordan and Kane were vague about just what had happened down below.

"We're lucky at that," decided Greely. "It was a put-up job; Diaz planned it. Well, it's my fault. I've decided we'd better cut and run. You were right about the folly of sticking around here, Brainard."

"Huh!" grunted the latter. "How you making it, Hicks?"

"Okay." The chief gunner's mate grinned. "Just goes to show that knives aint much good against pistols.

Those fellows are used to knives, though—and—and—good gosh!"

With a labored effort he came to his knees, caught Greely's arm, and pulled himself erect. He was staring over the rail. The others turned to follow his gaze. And then Greely saw it, like the crawling phantom of a dream.

Not a hundred yards away, breasting up through the glassy water; how long the periscope had been showing, no one could say. Now it was periscope and conning-tower together. The spray was falling away, the water was washing off, as she broached. The conning-tower came clear, the long forward deck showed awash, the long after deck heaved up.

NO one moved, no one spoke. Greely stood in stupefaction, staring blankly. A man appeared in the conning-tower; then others came. They streamed to the gun mounted forward, others streamed aft.

A hoarse, inarticulate sound burst from Hicks, a whinny of excitement. He stumbled toward the gun. Then his voice came thickly.

"Come on, come on, come on! One of you guys! There's a load in her! Stand by with the other shell!"

Riordan burst into a roar and joined him. Frantically Hicks worked, and the long muzzle came down and down. The sub was high out of the water now. Someone was signaling with flags from her conning-tower.

With a mad, deafening explosion, the gun went off. Greely watched as though thrall in dream; he was incapable of speech or movement. He saw the shell strike the water—it had gone over her. The men along her decks flew into a flurry of movement. Hicks was cursing like a madman. Then her forward gun belched, and a shell slapped into the *Stanwick* up forward. Another belch, as the first shell burst—the bridge this time. The cursing of Hicks rose to a scream.

Another belch and another. The tanker's whole forward superstructure flew apart, and a great burst of flame rose from her. Greely was sent reeling, Brainard was knocked flat. Like a little far-off noise, Greely heard the gun almost beside him explode for the second time.

And that second shell went home just under the conning-tower. It was incredible: with the burst, the under-sea boat heeled over, the conning-tower flew to pieces. A foaming rush of water swept over and into her. Like a toy thing, she seemed to break in two and was gone, all in an instant, leaving a few bobbing heads in the muck of oily water.

Riordan and Hicks, wounds forgotten, were hugging each other—when there came another explosion

forward, another burst of flame. A second oil-tank had gone up. Flames rose into the heavens like a fiery torch, black smoke gushed upward, and Greely woke up.

"She's done for!" he shouted. "Quick! The boat—our boat! On the jump!"

Now it was a mad, riotous scramble to breast that up-gush of fiery heat, but they made it. Down the Jacob's ladder, down the lines any old way, and into the boat. Greely cast off and the oars hit the water. Hicks collapsed. Limey Kane fell over his oar. Greely and Riordan pulled like frenzied beings, and the boat crawled astern. Brainard took Kane's oar and added his weight and they crawled faster.

A hundred feet—another—and the *Stanwick* blew to pieces amidships. The roaring blast reached across the water. Bits of wreckage flew all about. Nothing was left except her stern, rearing high and higher above the fiery flaming water; then she plunged and was gone, leaving only a black smoke-loom of burning oil.

GREELY stood up and looked to where the submarine had been. The bobbing heads had vanished. He sat down again and stared at Brainard.

"Well," said the latter with a ghastly grin, "you got your sub."

"Not I—Hicks."

They all looked one at another, Hicks sitting up on his thwart, Kane

raising his head and peering about. It was Greely who found words.

"D'ye know what?" he asked. "Here we are—same blessed boat—still bound for Africa! Everything else gone to glory!"

"Gone to glory is right," said Riordan. "Praise be! Here's a breeze coming up. Get to the tiller, Greely. Still your ship—keep command!"

Brainard gave his harsh laugh.

"Aye, keep command, Greely! Let's get that mast stepped. Whither bound now, Cap'n?"

"Africa," said Greely, and found a smile in Brainard's eyes—a warm and kindly smile. "Needs must," he added, chuckling, "when the devil drives."

"Aye, shipmate!" said Brainard heartily.

BLUE BOOK'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Edited by
Albert H. Morehead

This type of crossword puzzle is designed to offer a challenge for your imagination instead of a test of your vocabulary. That is

to say, the difficulty is not in the words themselves, but in the definitions. The main types used are the anagram, the enigma, the

hidden word and—for variety to keep you guessing—some straight dictionary definitions. (Solution on page 98.)

ACROSS

- 1 Edgar's now in the ranks
- 7 Ma's inner self, returning through the fire
- 13 Sir — Tree makes an exit
- 14 Can break up if large
- 16 Vera gets into debt for cow
- 17 Roweler spurs on — then lets down
- 18 Stones, spelt another way
- 19 Depicts a great story while in a state of delirium
- 21 Lady's made
- 22 Collegians say he lies
- 23 Slaps or snaps back about Kay
- 25 A retreat in Scandinavia, save the mark
- 26 Sounds like a letter for the Bishop's place
- 27 Find a can in the street? That's a job!
- 28 Inclined to embrace add and be pardoned
- 30 Drag around a pin—you'll soon be folding
- 32 If your feeling were hard before it could be less after
- 33 The Norwegian diet is sitting in hiding
- 34 Befallen around autumn
- 35 Probing with a sharp point around the bee eye
- 37 Big Red's involved and comes across
- 40 A piece of cloth I swapped with R
- 41 Esau: "all over like an — garment." Genesis xxv. 25
- 42 The field of Orleans
- 44 H— makes a curse; it goes against the grain
- 45 The Scot's cold in the middle, yet burns

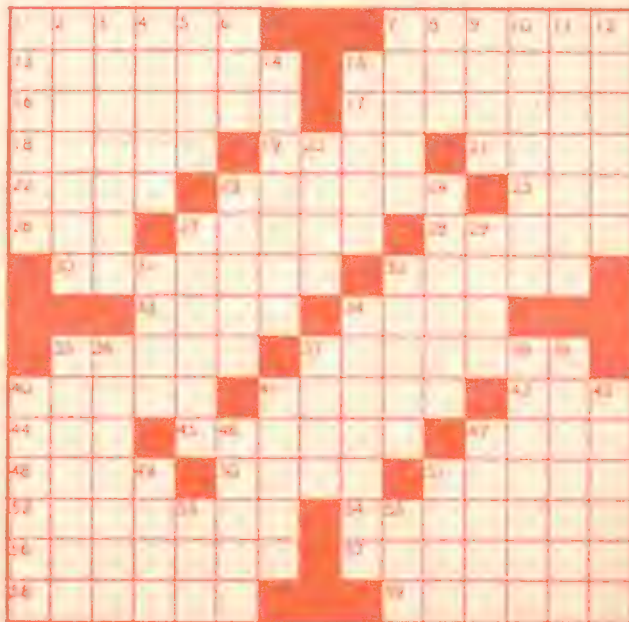
- 47 Indites and puts in prison
- 48 Tempest in a bowl
- 50 All is quiet as the bedtime song begins
- 51 Davis is more than a singer
- 52 I warn 'em, and a trouble-shooter comes
- 54 M 'n' 8 and what will come out
- 56 Only a novice would agitate near TNT
- 57 Do trail about — it's so broadening
- 58 Obese Tsar Alexander hides from the plagues
- 59 Ed. rest on your laurels

DOWN

- 1 Fumbles for \$1,000 necklaces
- 2 If I were middling I'd be scorned, not celebrated
- 3 A studio to change—i. e., alter
- 4 Fouls, and begins to stride back
- 5 At last, chimneras belong to the ages;
- 6 But added age would make garb phonetically awful;
- 7 And here's the garb, mostly stone
- 8 I get a wail from below at this regulation
- 9 Egad is archaic
- 10 Spanish spectator on the balcony
- 11 Condition of the weather
- 12 Renee's now calm
- 14 Geeps in movement to effect infiltration
- 15 To fire striker is waste in the end
- 20 Hurt to find father no good

- 23 In the dead past gnats would return and bite
- 24 Ep's dye is generally fast
- 27 Barbs put in in hope
- 29 Their angora hid until they called
- 31 On 'an atoll, almost
- 32 Lords of the shire, to be
- 34 The new wife led, her head held high
- 35 Plainer sort of candy
- 36 The only answers for rotters
- 37 He drank high- and went to see Lucille
- 38 Any sort of valet gets a raise with ease

- 39 What Honorable gentleman commits treason?
- 40 We are caught in a net by Ty (of the Tigers)
- 41 Hunt a ghost?
- 43 A tress (from behind) is in such a state!
- 46 Families that get sad create such scandals
- 47 Fruits found in Spain
- 49 We are without a center, but that's past
- 51 Lead into the valley
- 53 I'd have to admit this is a tangle
- 55 In the heart of the dim-out



A picture of the old West that still lives.

by Stephen Payne

The TRAIL

THE boy stood, a diminutive figure against the background of log house and log stable and pole corrals, a wistful, rapt expression on his serious little face, and a great longing in his blue eyes. His hat, a man's sombrero sizes and sizes too large for him, but with folded paper snugly fitted inside its sweat-band, was pushed back from his forehead, on which curly brown hair lay damp and heavy. His too-large shirt was a bleached blue, like his patched overalls held up by a thin leather strap. These were tucked into the tops of pegged boots with brass toes. Such grand boots—except for one thing: they did not have high heels.

There was the rumble of a wagon and the music of jingling tiny bells yonder on the road. That brown ribbon of road was beyond a buck and pole fence, and beyond it the sagebrush plains rolled away to meet tumbled hills and distant mountains. The hills were breath-taking with aspen groves beginning to change color from cold fingers of autumn; the mountains a beautiful background of dark blue pines, deep and twisting cañons, bald ridges that showed a vivid bronze in the afternoon sunlight.

But all this held no interest for small Billy Harland. The Bell Bar outfit's chuck-wagon, now swinging eastward along the road with old Sam, the Negro cook, handling the ribbons over the four trotting horses, held his eyes in fascination. So too did the Bell Bar cavvy trailing along in the wagon's dust. Black horses and bays, duns and browns and grays, with a sprinkling of whites and pintos, all with trimmed tails, and mostly saddle-marked. All were logy, so logy that the wrangler who lashed them with the end of his rawhide rope had lost his voice, and now the only sound of it came to Billy Harland in a high, squeaky whisper: "Git along! Git along!"

"Git along, little dogie," Billy completed the phrase. The tinkle-tinkle of cavvy bells—they never lost their voices—was more than music to his ears. It was the sweetest and most alluring sound to be heard on earth.

Every September for the past four years it had seemed he just couldn't wait for the big cow outfits to come trailing past his father's ranch. Billy, wise beyond his twelve years, knew it was just a dinky, one-horse ranch. He also knew that cow-men called his father a "nester."

They'd been trailing past this U L ranch of Harland's for longer than four years, the big cow outfits from over beyond the Scalp Locks, that mighty mountain range on the western horizon, coming from a land mysterious and wonderful in Billy's mind. Known to Billy only as the Wild River Country, it was still a land of open range where the Bell Bar and other outfits grazed their thousands of cattle and never fed them hay in winter: where cowboys—real cowboys—were busy the year around doing—well, Billy was not exactly certain what they did. But he had heard of calf round-ups and beef round-ups, and it was after the beef round-ups when the trail herds—the Bell Bar's in particular—came meandering slowly, so slowly, from that great world to this small one wherein he lived, and went on to the distant railroad and the shipping-pens at Dagmar.

Far in the distance to westward, with the bright afternoon's sunlight all shimmering in heat-haze on the sage, he could see the dust-cloud which marked the whereabouts of this fall's Bell Bar beef-herd; under that hovering cloud the picture of what he might see if only the cattle were nearer was crystal clear. He'd seen it all before: the long thin column of cattle on the march, a mile-long string of big-bodied horned steers. A few blacks and off-colors, a sprinkling of spotted steers and some with white faces. But mostly red steers, fat proud, important cattle, spooky and wild.

(A fella'd sure get his ears knocked down and his tail end burnt plenty by cow-hands and boss alike if he hadn't no better sense than to get near them steers on foot.)

There'd be a dusty cow-puncher riding up on point—maybe two of them—then another puncher farther back along the line, and another and another and another till you got back to

the boys bringing up the drags, in the dust—the thickest dust. The boss, so Billy had both heard and noticed, always put the poorest cowboys—meaning by that the least useful—on drag. The boss generally rode point, and that was where Lance Graves would be riding today.

Lance Graves! The greatest man in the whole world. Last fall he had talked to Billy as if—why, exactly as if Billy were a cow-puncher, too. Lance Graves, straight and slender and tall, with a little black mustache under his slightly crooked nose, and good-humored brown eyes that looked so straight out at you from the crowding wind-and-sun wrinkles. Lance somehow managed to look neat and clean—at least when Billy had seen him.

Lance wore leather chaps and a big gun. His spurs—Billy could have described in exact detail every last thing about Lance Graves' spurs, his boots, saddle, bridle, hackamore and all the rest of his personal outfit. Twice this last summer Billy had picked fights deliberately with Toughy Jones, the big kid and bully of his school, secretly hoping Toughy would knock his nose slightly askew. Each time Billy had drawn a thorough beating, but no crooked nose.

He dragged his glowing eyes away from the distant dust-banner and looked eastward along the road which hugged his father's fence for a half-mile before crossing a creek valley. Ah! Just as he'd hoped, the chuck-wagon had camped on the creek; the cavvy was watering and grazing there too. Tonight, on higher ground beyond the small valley, the Bell Bar herd would be bedded, and if he kept his window wide open, he might hear the cavvy bells' music and the singing of the night herders. He'd lie awake all night long.

ABRUPTLY his dreams faded, and he slid back into his own commonplace, insignificant world. His mother was calling: "Billy, Billy! Bring me some wood and some water, too. You should have brought that wood an hour ago."

Reluctantly Billy trudged toward the woodpile. Shucks! It was always



HERD GOES BY

this way. A fella always had to do things he didn't like: had to help Dad build fence and irrigate and put up hay; had to milk cows, and feed pot-bellied skin-milk calves night and morning. Cut wood and lug water for Mother, maybe churn and do other things. Lots of things Sis ought to do and didn't, because she was bigger and older than Billy, and could put things off on him. Dotty thought she was a young lady nowadays, and hadn't she told him to call her Dorothy when company was around?

The resolve which had been growing in Billy's mind for the past twelve months strengthened: if only he could screw up his courage to take the contemplated step! He carried in firewood; he carried water from the nearby spring and filled the reservoir on the stove without being asked. He even brought two extra pails of water and set them on the bench.

Dotty had stopped knitting something and had her nose in a book. Humph! Always a-reading if she had a chance. Borrowing books from the neighbors, the Harlands had so few of their own. She was kinda lazy, Billy thought; but then, girls were awful funny anyhow. Billy hated all books except big mail-order catalogues and saddle catalogues. Oh, yes! There was that story about *D'Artagnan* and the *Three Musketeers* which Sis had given him to read, and he'd found pretty much of all right.

Mother was making butter. And she had the supper, at least some of it, cooking on the stove. Billy often wondered why Mother looked tired and sort of wrinkled and gray. She sure didn't have much to do, just cooking and washing clothes and dishes, taking care of the chickens and milk and fixing the garden in spring and summer and tinkering around the house pasting new newspapers on the walls and ceiling where leaks had cracked and stained old ones. Other times she didn't always have to be making new clothes or patching old ones or putting up jelly or something. Probably she was wrinkled because she was really old. Thirty-four last birthday, pretty far along, Billy allowed. But when she was all fixed up to go to

town, she didn't look so ancient; and anyhow, she was just an awful nice person. Generally real understanding, too. Billy hoped she was going to understand now.

He cleared his throat: "Let me help you with the butter, Ma."

Her eyebrows lifted, and her eyes, blue like his, looked straight at him and looked right through him, and she smiled. "Go along with you. I made fresh doughnuts this morning. They're in the pantry."

BILLY'S freckled face lighted for a moment. Then the shadow returned. "Thanks, Ma. I don't want one. It—it'd stop me from eating as much of Sam's chuck as I'd like to."

"Sam's chuck?"

"Well, yes, Ma. Lance let me eat with the Bell Bar waddies last year. You remember? He came to the house to buy butter and— Don't you s'pose he'll come again for more butter?"

"I'm churning a day ahead of regular time, William. . . . You want my consent to go with Lance if he asks you to his camp?"

"How'd you guess! Nor that aint all. Ma, you s'pose you might just sort of back me up when I ask Dad for old Pete to ride when he comes in with the team? You know how he is, always says the team's worked hard and needs rest. Mother, why don't we have more horses, like some other people—riding-horses? Why, Dad aint got even a saddle, to say nothing of a saddle-horse."

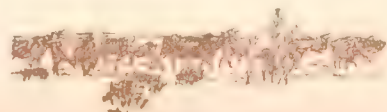
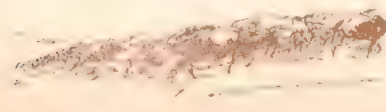
"Son, you'd better bring in the milch cows and get your milking done early and the calves fed. Then Dad will—"

"Will feel more 'greeable to letting me take old Pete? All right, Ma."

Billy ran out and whistled for his dog. Ted was a shaggy mongrel long past his prime, stiff and uncertain of legs, and of so little worth that Dad Harland often spoke of shooting him. Now boy and dog trotted together out across brown stubble of the meadow where brown willows along the stream broke the monotony, and three small stacks of hay gave silent testimony that Harland's ranch did produce a little something of value.



Illustrated by Roy Besser



There were eight cows and a yearling bull, but two of the cows were dry, so only six were to be milked. Billy, rounding them up and heading them toward the corrals, had the Bell Bar trail-herd in the corner of his eye all the while. The outfit was nearer, much nearer, and—yes, Lance Graves was riding point. Even at a half-mile, Billy was sure of that. How that man sat a horse—like he was growed to it! Lance was pointing the herd well out around the Harland ranch, for range cattle, different from stodgy milch cows, were scary of buildings and dogs and people.

Billy hustled the cows to their corral and began the milking. He must be right on hand when Lance came. But shucks, he hadn't really needed to get such a hustle on himself, for Lance didn't come riding to the house until after all the steers had passed the ranch—at least a thousand head, Billy thought—and were watering at the creek farther along below the trail-herd camp, where the country was open.

Only when the setting sun had painted the jagged crest of the far-flung mountain range a vivid yellow did Lance Graves ride slowly into the yard. Except that the horse was different, everything about the cow-man was the same as last fall, even to his slicker tied behind his saddle, one end of it hanging far down. And Lance must have shaved that morning or last night. His smile was a bright thing that touched and thrilled Billy, and his voice, soft and gentle and drawing, was music to Billy's ears.

"Lo, Button! How you makin' out?"

Billy choked and stammered: "Just fine, Lance." Of course he could call him Lance. All his cowboys did. "Good to see you." That was the way a man would say it, wasn't it?

At the house door Billy's mother said, "How do you do, Mr. Graves?" and behind Mother, looking over her shoulder, Dorothy Harland let her eyes run over the cow-man before she turned away with an interest she did not wish to make apparent.

Lance Graves stepped down from his saddle with an easy, unconscious grace which Billy wondered if he could ever match. He took off his hat, a plain wide-brimmed one covered with dust, and he bowed to Mrs. Harland. He said: "Mighty, mighty nice secin' you again, Mrs. Harland. . . . Your butter was dandy. You got any to spare now?"

Billy thought: "Huh! That dad-blamed Toughy Jones and Ken Roper said cow-punchers always talked tough. I told 'em Lance talked swell and they said: 'Oh, ye-ah?'"

Billy's mother said she might sell ten pounds of butter, and Lance said he'd take it all and wished she had more. He'd take all the eggs she could spare, too. While the deal was being consummated, Billy proudly held Lance's horse by the bridle reins while a nervous uneasiness grew within him. Dad hadn't yet come home from the other field—the desert claim which he was fencing. Billy still had no saddle-horse; nor had Lance as yet invited him to the chuck-wagon camp. . . . Were Lance's long legs just a little bit bowed? He believed now that they were. How could Billy get exactly the right amount of bow into his own rather stubby legs?

Spurs jingled as Lance walked out of the house. Under one arm he carried the butter wrapped in newspaper—from his other hand hung a tin pail heavy with eggs, each with a bit of paper wrapped around it. Billy reached for the pail.

"I'll carry it for you."

LEADING the cow-man's horse, he walked out to the bars in the fence beyond which lay the road: and as Lance put up the bar poles Billy said: "I've got my chores all done."

There was something welling up inside him. But Lance didn't seem to hear. The boy watched the man swing up to his saddle; he heard him say: "Hand me the eggs, Button. I can make out now. And thanks."

Billy clung to the egg-bucket as if to a life preserver. "Mother aint expecting me to stay home for supper," he remarked, and felt his lower lip quiver.

A strange expression came into the cow-puncher's brown, weather-beaten face, but his thoughts still seemed far away. In desperation Billy tried once more:

"I can carry the eggs for you to camp. That way your horse won't get scared, and they won't get broken."

The flash of Lance's smile was sunshine after frightful rumble of thunder. "Now, why didn't I think of that?" He stepped down from his saddle with the lithe grace of movement so fascinating to the boy. "Suppose I carry the plunder and you ride."

"That'll be—that'll be—" It was all Billy could get out.

With Lance walking alongside, he rode to the Bell Bar's trail-herd camp. There old Smoky Sam welcomed him with a plate, cup, knife, fork and spoon from the chuck-box. "Jus' help yo'self to the chuck in the pots, Massa Billy. Sho' is great to see yo'."

All eyes and ears, Billy ate with part of the cow-hands. Others were out with the herd, moving the steers slowly and gently away from the stream and up onto higher ground to bed them for the night. The cow-punchers, Billy thought, weren't overly clean, although they had doused their faces with water, and from the looks of Sam's towel, had wiped off on it a goodly part of the trail dust and grime. Their shirts and vests were soiled; most of them hadn't shaved in days; and one red-headed fellow had the sorest lips Billy had ever seen—chapped by sun and wind and alkali dust. Another carried a bandaged left arm in a sling.

Billy wished they'd talk as they hungrily dipped into that fresh butter to go with Smoky Sam's hot biscuits. Such grand biscuits. But then—gee whiz, everything, even the black coffee, tasted like— He couldn't find the right words.

He sat on a bed that was rolled in an earth-colored tarp with two big rips in it, and held his plate on his knees and watched the cowboys and Smoky Sam. He watched the cattle in the distance, and the cavvy grazing in the valley with nobody guarding it just now. The smell of wood-smoke and of sage and of sweaty saddle-blankets and cooking smells as well were in his nostrils; and at last he heard the small talk of the men run around him, heard the music of the cavvy bells as a subdued melody which seemed far away.

There was the rustle of small night-prowling animals in the grass and sage, and occasionally a night-hawk voiced its plaintive cry as it winged unseen across the nearer sky. 'Sunset's glory had faded reluctantly, and the cold air of night came stealing around the camp— The camp of this cow outfit with its bright wood fire, its enchantment.

Billy Harland was living in another world, a world to dream about after these men of adventurous—and to him mysterious-alluring lives had gone onward along the trail. Tonight, in fancy he was one of them, and oh, man, say, wouldn't he have something to tell the other kids in school on the day after tomorrow—on Monday!





All too soon the meal was over, and then Lance was riding into the liquid darkness with other men to relieve those on herd. But still Billy lingered, helping Smoky Sam with the dishes, something not at all displeasing to the horse wrangler. Not displeasing, for Billy had learned long ago that the wrangler was supposed to be cook's flunkie as well as wrangler. Smoky Sam was so friendly, so sympathetic that after a time Billy ventured a question. There was one other and more important question which he must ask Lance Graves yet tonight; a question which for a year Billy had turned

"Hand me the eggs, Button," said Lance. "I can make out now."

over in his mind and which, earlier this evening he had stiffened his resolve to ask. But this was not it, though it was something he was curious about; and of Sam he inquired:

"Sam, you mind telling me how Lance got his nose bent to one side?"

HE held his breath, but the reply was matter-of-fact and immediate. "A hoss done kicked him in the face. Some long time ago. Why, Billy?"

"Oh," said Billy. "No reason. Lance'll be coming back afore I got to go home?"

"Ah reckon so. . . . Yo' can sleep with one of the boys, Billy."

"Say, would I like—" Billy stopped and his joy faded. "No. Mom wouldn't like it. Dad neither."

He prowled around the camp, helping some of the cowboys to spread out their beds. When he expressed amazement that they should turn in so early, a youthful rider answered: "Kid, we're standin' two-hour shifts night-herdin'. Besides, this outfit hits the trail early. Plumb."

Lance rode to camp at last. Billy saw him and hurried to where the boss was picketing his night horse. It was good to find the man all alone, because the cowboys might start razzing a fella if they heard what he was going to ask.

"Enjoy your visit, Button?" Lance asked.

"You just know it, Lance." Wonderful to feel that he knew this great man so well. He drew up his courage and asked his great question: "Don't



you need another man in your outfit, Lance?"

If Lance Graves laughed at him now, or if he poked fun at him—But Lance was not laughing. He was not even smiling. His drawly voice was grave and kind.

"Sorry, Billy. We're full-handed."

Billy turned to hide his face from his hero. A lump in his throat interfered with his voice. "I—I was afraid it'd be that way, Lance. Well—well, thanks and good night."

"So long, Bill. I'll be seeing you next fall?"

"You sure will, Lance."

Billy held his shoulders stiff as he walked back to the Harland ranch-house, but twice on the way he stopped and lifted one hand to his eyes. The hand when it came away was damp.

"Brace up, fella," he growled fiercely to himself. "'Twas just too much to expect—yet. But some day—"

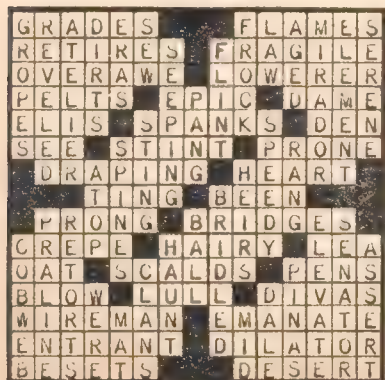
Some day! That was the thought to carry a fellow on and on and up and up, till at last he made a man of himself—like Lance Graves.

He entered the dark house silently so as not to disturb his father and he called upon to answer questions. The window of his bedroom squeaked as he opened it wide and then stood looking out at the great twinkling stars and out across the darkness, seeing nothing of the beef-herd or the camp or the cavvy, but hearing, softly and remotely on the clear and silent night air, that alluring music of the cavvy bells and the voice of a night-herder crooning to sleeping cattle:

*Now people of the Eastern towns
It's little that you know
About the Western prairies
Where the beef you eat does grow.
Where the horses, they run wild
With the mountain sheep and ram,
And the cowboy sleeps contented
On the grass of Uncle Sam.*

Snuggling into his bed, Billy mused: "Sort of gets me." And then stoutly he assured himself: "Some day!"

Solution to Crossword Puzzle on page 93



Somewhere on

Wisdom may come out of the mouths of fools and children—even in a broadcasting station.

WELL, it wasn't enough we should have already lost a man to the Navy, another to the Air Corps, and a third to the OWI; now the long arm of the Army had wriggled in and grabbed two more of our most valuable volubles right from in front of the mike.

So, being the Program Director of WITS—"Keep Tuned to the WITS End of Your Dial!"—I was struggling to juggle the schedule so the remaining announcers could get home once in a while on compassionate leave, when Al Raymond, manager of our station, wafted gayly into my office.

"Ah, there, William!" he chirruped. "How's every little thing by you this bright and beautiful morning?"

I groaned and hunched forward resignedly. "Skip the anesthetic," I sighed. "Just chuck it on and stand back."

"Eh?" said Al, trying to look innocent.

"The straw," I told him, "that dents the dromedary's dorsal. Pile it on and get out of the way."

"Bill," asked my alleged superior temptingly, "Bill, my boy, how would you like to work for Uncle Sam?"

"What do you think I'm doing now?" I snorted. "With one per cent in social security, more maybe in a withholding tax, and another ten in bonds, I'm a one-man second front already!"

"This," said Raymond, "is different. We're going to present a new series of public service programs for the local Office of Civilian Defense—and you're going to be in charge of the works."

"Whoi!" I gasped. "M-me?"

"Absolutely. It's a great privilege, William—"

"Now, hold everything, Al! I don't know beans about defense, and even less about civilians! Anyhow, I've got all the work I can handle, without—"

"Then you'll do it?" broke in the Chief. "Great! I knew you'd leap at the chance. —Oh, Mr. Dodd!"

He raised his voice on this last, and the door eased open to admit a stranger. A stranger-looking jasper than you ever laid eyes on, is what I mean. He was about as tall as an old-fashioned hat-rack, and was built along the same lines. Lanky and knobby, a collection of arms and legs

topped by a wilted chrysanthemum mop of hair and a puppy-dog grin that stretched from ear to there.

"William," said the Chief, "this is Mr. Oliver Dodd. Mr. Dodd, meet Bill Meighan, who will help put on your show."

"Gee!" gulped Dodd, grabbing my hand as if he wanted it for a souvenir. "Gee, that's swell of you, Mr. Meighan! I was afraid nobody would like my idea. But with your help—"

"Don't look now," I murmured, "but since I'm in this thing up to the hilt—and *vice versa*—what is the idea?"

"Well," explained Dodd, "we're going to put on three fifteen-minute programs a week under the auspices of the OCD. These shows will be designed to instruct the public as to how each individual can best co-operate with the Government in its war activities on the Home Front.

"Information on new laws and practices will be given out, and the reasons for these policies explained. Our prime object will be to teach our listeners—"

"Your *what*?" I sniffed. "Look, Dodd, I'm not trying to be a wet blanket, but it simply won't pan out. Radio is a highly competitive business. As much as our Sales Department hates to admit it, we're bucked pretty strongly right here in Newville by the other local outlet, WXZX. We've got to match them dance band for dance band, soap-opera for soap-opera, to hold our public. If we louse up the ether three times a week with fifteen-minute factual monologues, our listeners will be as rare as truth in a Goebbels oration."

"Oh," cried Dodd, "but we're not planning to present our program in narrative form!"

"No? Then how—"

"We've enlisted volunteer actors from every dramatic society in town. The Newville Little Theater, the Upstagers, the Gilbert and Sullivan Players, the high school's Sock and Buskin, the Children's Playhouse—all of them. All told, we have enrolled more than sixty amateur thespians."

I shuddered and attacked on a new salient.

"But the scripts for these shows, Dodd? There's not a single trained script-writer in Newville."

the Home Front

by Nelson Bond

"Oh—that!" Dodd smiled serenely. "That's where I come in, Mr. Mcighan. I will prepare the scripts."

"You? You're a script-writer?"

"I have written many stage plays," acknowledged Dodd modestly. "It should not be difficult to master the somewhat simpler technique of radio dramatization—"

I moaned and hurled my last desperate sabot into the works. "Al," I said to the Chief, "this is a *marvelous* idea! Simply marvelous! But—we can't go through with it.

"You see, dramatized shows call for the use of sound effects. Sounds re-



quire the services of a second operator in the control-room. And since Johnny Green joined the Navy, we have only one operator. He's on the transmitter. He doesn't have time to—"

Dodd's jaw sagged. But the boss just smiled.

"One operator, William?" he repeated placidly. "Oh, no! Didn't I tell you? We hired a new one today."

"A—a new one?" I faltered. "But where did you get him? We advertised in the *Banner* for weeks."

"I didn't say," said Al, "it was a man."

"You mean you hired a *woman* operator? Al! Have you gone nuts?"

Illustrated by Frederic Anderson

"This one," smiled Raymond complacently, "will prove thoroughly capable, William. She has a solid background—"

"I don't give a hang *what* she looks like!" I howled. "Women have no place in radio! Boss, you can't—"

"The young lady in question," interrupted the Chief, "has already been employed. She starts tomorrow. And you'll like it, Meighan, or else! Because the girl operator happens to be—my daughter!"

See what I mean? Everything happens to Meighan!

SO that was that. Loreen Raymond was in the control-room, and I was out on a limb; Oliver Dodd was up amongst the clouds, and the boss was down on my neck, and please pass the aspirin.

The situation wasn't as bad as I had feared—it was worse. I began to realize the full horror of what lay before me when, a few days later, Oliver Dodd bounced into my office and plunked a manuscript on my desk.

"Here it is, Mr. Meighan!" he chorled gayly. "Will you please okay it so I can start rehearsals?"

"It" consisted of some twenty-odd pages of very hard and heavily-sized foolscap, single-spaced and tightly riveted down the left-hand margin with a row of staples. I picked it up, leafed through it gingerly.

"What is it?" I demanded. "Your memoirs?"

"The script for our first OCD show, of course," said Dodd. "Go ahead: read it."

I said, "Holy Hector, Dodd, is this supposed to be a quarter-hour broadcast? Why, you've got enough material here for a forty-five-minute show!"

"I—I have?" asked Dodd bleakly. "Gee, I was afraid I was writing a little too much, maybe. But I got interested in my subject, and"—he brightened—"oh, well, I guess it can be shaved a trifle—"

"Shaved, your eye! What this job needs is a plucking and shearing operation. Don't forget, Dodd, by the time your show is flanked with a pair of spots you've only got thirteen and a half minutes air time: Time for about eighteen hundred words. Six of these pages is par for the course.

"And another thing—before you type the final draft of this script, get some light, rattproof paper from one of the girls in the outer office. Shake these sheets before the mike and it will sound like the Chicago fire!"

Dodd said, "Yes, Mr. Meighan," meekly. "I'll revise it right away. Is—is there anything else?"

"Plenty else!" I grunted. "Double-space this turkey, and when you're retyping it, cue the actors down the

left margin. Write all sound effects in capital letters, and make an extra copy for the operator. Got that?"

"Yes sir."

"Good! Now, what's this script about?"

"Why, the scrap-collection drive, sir. In the play, some women meet at a bridge-party and discuss the problems of collecting tin cans, scrap metals and rubber—"

"Why waste words on a subject like that?" I frowned. "Our station has been plugging scrap-collection night and day for the past three months . . . and with excellent results. Why, Newville leads the State in per-capita scrap turn-in. Didn't you know that?"

"Yes," admitted Dodd grudgingly. "But there's *still* plenty of scrap to

es the stage! Dodd, are you crazy? You're writing for *radio*, not television! Who's going to be able to see Mary X stage R?"

Dodd looked stricken. "Gee," he confessed, "I never thought of that! I'll fix that right away too, Mr. Meighan. Thanks ever so much."

And he lurched away, clutching his brain-child gently to his bosom, as I sighed and returned to the task of finding for the OCD program a spot that wouldn't be heard by *too* many people. . .

Only it didn't work out that way. I worked over the allocation schedule till I was jaundice-jowled, but no matter how many times I shifted the digits, the answer was the same. Our Mon-Wed-Fri hours were as tight as a



"That job needs a plucking and shearing operation, Dodd," I said.

be found if they really look about for it—"

"Sure! They haven't started taking the fillings out of our teeth yet! Oh, well, if that's what you want to write about, it's no skin off— Good gravy! What's *this*?"

Dodd craned anxiously. "What's what, Mr. Meighan?"

"This—this piece of biz!" I stared awestruck at a cue on Page 9 of his script. It read:

MARY: Well, I must go now, girls.
(WAVES) Good-by! (SHE SMILES AND
X STAGE R.)

"That?" Dodd smiled seraphically. "Oh, that's just stage directions. An abbreviation of 'She smiles and crosses the stage to the right.' Technical stuff, you know."

"Technical stuff," I retorted, "and nonsense! Waves and smiles! Cross-

Waac's slacks except for one sweet, juicy little quarter hour at 3:15 p.m., cozily sandwiched between a world-news analysis and our most popular tear-jerker: "Fanny Folsom's Fate."

Which meant that Oliver Dodd's "Somewhere on the Home Front" would have more listeners than a Chihuahua has chills.

OF course, it never rains but it pours. Hardly had I succeeded in convincing my subconscious that everything was going to be all right—or a reasonable facsimile thereof—than in stalked our control-room operator, Joe McClary.

"Put it there, Meighan!" he stormed, shoving a hairy hand under my nose.

I grasped the proffered paw and pumped it dazedly.

"Don't tell me you're a grandfather again, Joe?"

"I'm a monkey's uncle," he raged, "and hyah, nephew! Give with the back pay, Bill. I'm quittin'!"

I said, "Now, wait a minute, Joe. Take it easy. We mustn't get excited. What seems to be the trouble?"

"Sabotage!" he growled. "Woman's place is in the home—not among the ohms. That confounded female—"

the control-room like a disembodied beanpole."

"You mean," I gasped, "Oliver Dodd?"

"Is that his name?" sniffed McClary. "She calls him Lamby-piel! Every time I look around, I find them two wrapped up in each other like a pair o' toasted marshmallows. I'm an easy-goin' man, Meighan, but enough is too much. Either that stuff goes or

"They're that bad?" I asked.

"Worse! They cackle an' grunt an' sound their s's like a nest o' stirred-up rattlesnakes. They prance all over the studio, wavin' their arms in the air an' posin'. Trouble is, they're all stage actors. They holler. When they're off mike they get a cross-fade, an' when they're *on* mike"—Joe shuddered—"Hell, we might just as well open the windows an' let 'em shout their speeches to the audience!"

"And Dodd?"

"Well, now," admitted McClary, "it's funny, but he's not bad. His voice is kind o' thin, but it sounds okay. But he aint figurin' on doin' any actin' hisself. He's just the director. When does the first show go on?"

"Monday," I said. "Three-fifteen. After that, each Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the same time—"

Joe grinned. "Like to make book on that?" he asked.

I HAD a chat with Loreen Raymond. She was as sweet and prim and demure as she was lovely. She was also as difficult as the first olive in a new jar. She said, "Oliver Dodd? Of course I like Oliver Dodd. Who wouldn't?"

"That," I acknowledged, "is a moot question. If you like him, okay, and Dodd bless you. But in the future, don't like him on company time. From now on, your only association with the OCD programs will be to put them on the air and take them off, following strictly the instructions on the scripts. Is that clear?"

It was. So I left.

Well, the next two days were Saturday and Sunday, so I spent the week-end trying to forget my tribulations. I made a good job of it; too good, in fact. I succeeded in drowning my sorrows so completely that by Monday A.M., both they and I needed artificial respiration.

To make a Blue Monday bluer, Oliver Dodd was waiting in my office when I finally got there. He had a revised copy of his script. He said, "I've rewritten it, Mr. Meighan. Do you want to okay it now?"

"Take it away!" I groaned. "Hide it somewhere. Put a label on it: *Do Not Open Until Xmas*—"

"But the show goes on this afternoon, Mr. Meighan!"

"All right; leave it here. I'll look it over later. Now, beat it! I want to be alone with my conscience."

So he eased off, and I went ten rounds with a bromo, finally winning a close decision, and after that those little green men scampered away and I felt well enough to tackle the accumulation of correspondence on my desk.

It was after one o'clock when Al Raymond barged into my theoretic-



"What's she done wrong?"

"What's she done right?" countered Joe. "She cut us off the network just as Hyperman was wrestlin' a sea-serpent. The phone's been ringin' ever since with kids wantin' to know who swallowed which? She got the transcriptions mixed up an' themed in the Hour of Meditation with boogie-woogie. Then to cap the climax, she followed the Sombre Hollow Funeral Home's commercial with a recordin' of 'I'll Be Glad when You're Dead, You Rascal, You!'"

I said thoughtfully, "That's bad, Joe. But we can't do much about it. The boss himself hired Loreen—"

"Is that her name?" demanded McClary. "He calls her Duckums!"

"He? Who? You don't mean one of the announcers has been making passes at Miss Raymond?"

"It aint one of our boys. Matter o' fact, it don't look like nothin' human. It's a clothespin on stilts, an' it haunts

I do. Jezebels an' decibels don't mix."

"You're absolutely right, Joe," I agreed. "I'll see Miss Raymond immediately and remind her that the rules forbid anyone but employees entering the control-room. That may fix matters. Get rid of Dodd, and she'll buckle down to her job. After all, she's a smart girl, even if she is Al's daughter."

"Well—all right," grumbled Joe. "But no stallin', Meighan! There's plenty o' good jobs open these days—"

"I'll take care of it," I promised hastily. Then to get his mind off its single track, "By the way, did you hear Dodd's OCD actors audition? How did they sound?"

"Are you kiddin'?" Joe ogled me suspiciously. "You don't *hear* hams like them; you *smell* 'em! If that bunch ever goes on the air the City Fathers is going to have to fumigate Newville afterward."

cally private office. The boss collects waifs and strays like some people collect cigarette coupons. Except he never gets any premiums. This time he had in tow not one but four fugitives from a daisy-chain. He made the introductions with the greasy grin that always presages woe for William.

"These gentlemen, Bill," he said jovially, "are from the Office of Civilian Defense."

"Then they're barking up the wrong tremens," I said. "Dodd's rehearsing his show upstairs in Studio B."

"Not the local OCD," corrected the Chief. "National headquarters. They've come down from Washington to study our set-up here."

"Indeed, yes, Mr. Meighan," said one of the visitors genially. "According to our most recent tabulation, Newville leads not only this State but the entire nation in per-capita scrap-collection. Obviously, such a showing is the result of superior Civilian Defense organization. It is our purpose to observe your methods in operation, then pass them on to other OCD branches throughout the country."

WELL, that was a horse of a different color. "Why, thank you, gentlemen!" I said. "Naturally, we'll be glad to help in any way possible—"

"We understand," said another of our guests. "you've set up a radio publicity program?"

"Oh, yes! We work in spot announcements all through the day—"

"I was telling our friends," said the boss brightly, "about your 'Somewhere on the Home Front' program. They're most eager to hear it. What time does it go on, William?"

"Oh," I said. "So it's my show now? It goes on at— Excuse me, please."

The telephone was jangling its ugly little head off. Loreen Raymond spoke from the control-room.

"Mr. Meighan?"

"Later, Loreen," I told her. "I've got visitors."

"It won't take but a moment. I've run into a little trouble on a technical problem. Which record gives the sound of four horses? I've looked through the entire file—"

"Four what?"

"Horses. It's a sound effect Oliver wants to use in his show. 'Hoofbeats: Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse riding across the Heavens.' Should I use the sound record for 'Chase' or 'Light Cavalry: Charge!' or 'Racetrack?' The last sounds best but it has a starting bell in it—"

I croaked, "Wait a minute!" hoarsely, and groped for Dodd's manuscript, leafed through it feverishly. Oliver Dodd had revised his drama. He had cut it to the approximate time requirements, retyped it on soft paper,

and eliminated Mary's waves and wanderings. He had removed all purely visual cues. But for them he had substituted such impossible auditory ones as *Crackle of torch: Liberty's beacon enlightens the world. . . . Gentle breeze rustling autumn leaves. . . . Voice of Freedom lifts in anguished cry*—and that beaut about the Horsemen.

"Well, Mr. Meighan?" prodded Loreen.

"Sit tight," I told her. "I'll be right up."

The boss glanced at me curiously as I rose. "What's the matter, William? Where are you going?"

"Nothing much," I explained. "Six feet of static on the air is all. Sorry, gentlemen. I'll be right back." And I scurried topside to the studios.

Oliver and his Dodd-awfuls were rehearsing in Studio B. They weren't on the air, of course, and you couldn't hear their voices through the sound-proof panes, but several of the announcers were standing there looking with a sort of macabre fascination at the frenzied movement going on within.

There must have been twenty in the cast. All twenty were in motion simultaneously. Arms gestured, mouths opened, scripts fluttered like baffled butterflies. Actors scampered to the mike, hurled violent invective into its silver throat, and scampered off again. In the background, an organist gave the Hammond a furious, incessant pounding, while at the sound mike a willing volunteer opened and closed our prop door with ardent enthusiasm. For some undiscernible reason, another guy kept shaking a balloon full of buckshot before the mike.

Only Dodd was immobile. Beatifically enthroned upon a desk-top, earphones ensnawdling his loving-cup ears, he was smiling and nodding his head, from time to time waving a hand in token of pleased approbation.

Bud Adkins heard my groan. He spoke breathlessly, a note of awe in his voice.

"It's terrific, Bill! Better than 'Hellzapoppin'.' We ought to open it to the public and charge admission! It's a—"

I BURST into the control-room. Loreen had piped the show in from B, and its tumult smashed down upon my eardrums. Music—voices—gunfire. It was stark bedlam. You couldn't hear yourself think. Loreen was fluttering from turntable to turntable, bringing in new sound effects as fast as she could grab the records. She smiled at me, and her lips moved.

"I can't hear you!" I bawled.

Her lips framed, "What?"

"I can't hear you!" I repeated.

"Oh!" She turned a dial, fading the racket to a wan chaos. "I said isn't it a marvelous show?"

Joe McClary appeared in the arch which separates his unit from the control-room. He too wore a pair of earphones. I stared at him, astonished.

"Don't tell me you've been listening to the show!"

JOE glared and snatched the phones from his head.

"These is muffers," he snarled, "not amplifiers! I warned you, Bill Meighan! Now, for the last time—"

"Never mind," I interrupted. "I've heard enough. I know what must be done. Loreen"—to the operator—"this show is not going on the air."

"What! Not go—"

"Downstairs," I pointed out, "are four visitors from the OCD headquarters. They came here to study our successful radio publicity methods. If they hear this program of Dodd's our reputation will wilt like yesterday's lettuce. We've got to kill the show. Joe, what's on the network at three-fifteen? Not a commercial show?"

"Nope," said McClary. "Sustaining. Yancy Yates an' his Yodelin' Yokels. Hill-billies."

"Bad," I said, "but not as bad as Dodd's Home Front. Pipe it in. I'll tell Adkins to give out with that 'Owing to circumstances beyond our control' spiel—"

"Mr. Meighan!" cried Loreen. "You can't! After all the trouble Oliver's gone to—"

"Oliver should talk about trouble!" "But the program's scheduled! He's rehearsed it all afternoon. You have no right—"

"On the contrary," I grinned, "I have every right in the world. The authority under which I operate in canceling this show was given me by the United States Government months ago. As a wartime measure, the Program Directors of stations throughout the entire nation have been designated as censors. I am merely exercising my privilege of censoring the script."

"Censoring?" echoed Loreen. "But there's nothing in Oliver's script—"

"Oh, no? How about this on Page 3? 'The sun shines brightly over our quiet city'—that's a weather report. All weather reports are banned from the air for the duration. On Page 4: 'Our peacetime manufacturing plants, converted to the manufacture of armaments, are working night and day'—that's military information. And on Page 6: 'When victory comes, we shall not ruthlessly destroy our beaten foe, but shall strive to bring them the blessings of our civilization'—that's aid and comfort to the enemy. No, Loreen. I'm sorry, but the show is canceled."

"Nice goin', Bill!" said Joe admiringly.

Loreen cried, "But—but you're going to give Oliver a chance to change the script, aren't you?"

"When he finishes his rehearsal," I said, "I'll talk to him in my office."

And I winked at McClary. He winked back. There are more kinds of stalls than the ones you park horses in. . . .

So I went back downstairs, and when the Chief raised his eyebrows I paved the way. "Little transmission trouble," I said. And we went on with our conversation.

A little while later, down came Oliver Dodd, looking worried. I sent out word that I'd see him directly. Which I didn't. I let him sit. And sit. So tempus fidgeted, and so did Dodd, and pretty soon it was three o'clock. Too late for him to revise his script. I excused myself, joined Dodd, and handed him the pages I had blue-penciled.

"Some censorable things in your show, Dodd," I said. "I've made a few changes. Here's the approved script."

He sighed relievedly.

"Gee, is that all? I was afraid—Loreen seemed to think, I mean—" Then he saw the script, and his jaw played tag with his weskit. He gasped; "But Mr. Meighan—it's *all* censored!"

"We-e-ell," I said, "yes. I'm afraid there are some changes—"

"Some changes! Why, practically every line has been cut! Mr. Meighan, my script has been ruined!"

"After all, Dodd," I told him reasonably, "there's a limit to what can and cannot be said on the air."

"Yes, I know. But you've scratched out almost every speech, Mr. Meighan! What am I going to do? Why, the script won't run more than four or five minutes in this form!"

"Myl!" I said. "That's too bad. Perhaps we'd better cancel the program for this afternoon, eh? Give you a chance to prepare a new script? Sorry, Dodd."

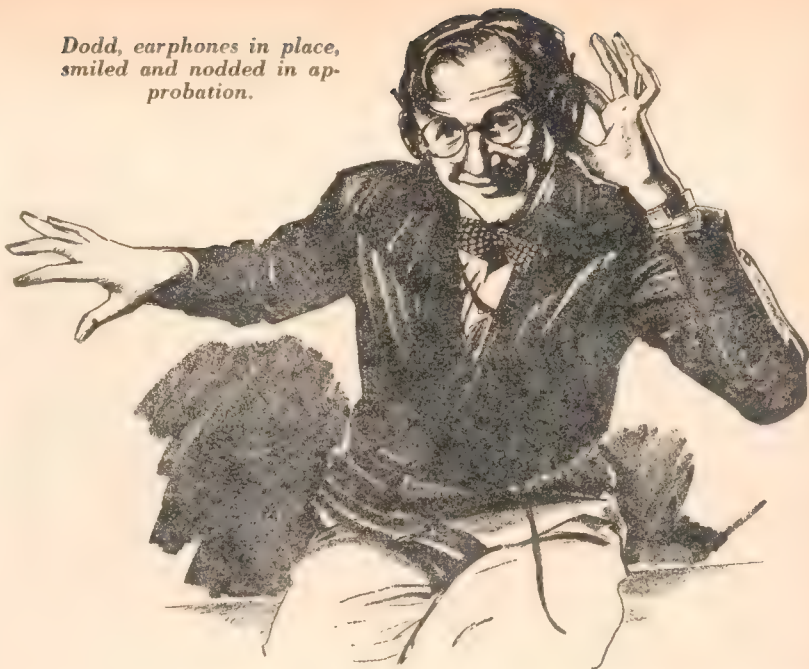
"Oh, no!" he cried frantically. "I don't want to do that, Mr. Meighan. My first show canceled? The OCD will be the laughingstock of Newville—"

"Very well, then," I broke in soothingly, "I'll tell McClary to pipe in the network. Never mind, Oliver. Lots of shows flop on their first try-out."

And I eased him gently from the office. Head bowed, he slumped upstairs to spread the mournful tidings.

THAT was at 3:05 P.M.; at 3:05.18 I rejoined Al Raymond and the OCDeities and Al asked, "Well, William; what now?" I shrugged and said, "Some technical trouble upstairs.

Dodd, earphones in place, smiled and nodded in approbation.



I think it's cleared up now, though." At 3:10 the boss flicked on my little desk radio. And at 3:11.15 Joe McClary loomed in the doorway like a baleful moon.

"Yeah, Bill?" he demanded.

I stared at him aghast.

"What are you doing here, McClary?" I asked.

"You ought to know. You sent for me, didn't you?"

"Certainly not! You're supposed to be—" A sudden horrible suspicion struck me. "Who told you I sent for you?"

"Why, she did, of course. Loreen." Al looked up sharply. "My daughter? What—"

My phone rang. I grabbed it, but quick. It was Bud Adkins. "Bill?" he shouted. "That gal in the control-room's gone nuts! It's 3:13.30. In thirty seconds, I'm supposed to make a spot announcement for Cousin Clara's Carmine Capsules, and the only door to the studio is locked and bolted!"

"Is there," I bawled, "anybody in the studio besides Loreen?"

"Why, yes. That Dodd fellow. How did you know?"

"A little bird told me," I groaned. "See if you can bust that door down. I'm on my way!"

Al clutched at my coat-sleeve as I whizzed past him. "See here, William! I demand an answer! What's going on?"

"Oliver Dodd!" I wailed. "Unless there's a machine-gun upstairs! Come on, Joe!"

And we fled before the storm broke.

We covered the staircase in three seconds flat for a new track record. Not that it mattered. As Adkins had said, the single door which feeds from the reception hall into both studios, the control-room and the transmitter room was closed tighter than a Scotsman's wallet. Bewildered announcers were milling about like moths in an all-wool suit, staring through the panes at Loreen Raymond in the control-room and Oliver at the mike in Studio B.

Dodd, stripped for action, stood coatless, vestless, scriptless and breathless, awaiting the ON THE AIR signal. I pounded on the window furiously, but he ignored my gesticulations. Nor would Loreen heed me—to her—in-audible motions of outrage. Calmly she removed the transcription she had run in Cousin Clara's spot, twisted dials, and then:

"The Office of Civilian Defense presents—Somewhere on the Home Front!" she announced in a cool, clear voice.

Up came the theme: fifteen seconds of martial music. I sank, trembling, into the nearest chair. There was nothing I could do now. Mr. Dodd had the air.

McClary fumed; "The roof, Bill! We can bust loose a cable or something—"

"No use," I told him wearily. "We can't destroy the whole station on Dodd's account. Any show's better than dead air."

"You hope!" said Joe.

I shrugged. "He's buttered his bread; let him lie in it!"

The theme faded under and out; Dodd started talking

The funny part of it is, he didn't sound so bad. As Joe had said, his voice was thin but pleasant. He introduced himself swiftly, neatly, smoothly—considering the fact that he was ad libbing the whole job.

"This is your OCD reporter, talking to you on behalf of the local Office of Civilian Defense. Today my subject is scrap-collection—"

I glanced at Joe and smiled feebly. He gave me some of the same. We were both breathing a bit easier. There was a possibility this might not be too bad, after all. Anything would be an improvement over the originally planned program

—Newville has won national recognition by turning in more pounds of scrap per person than any other city in the United States. This is a proud distinction—"

"Well!" said Joe, gratified. "He's doin' all right, eh? The public'll gobble that up. Everybody likes a slap on the back."

"But—" said Oliver Dodd

And then it came!

"But," continued Oliver Dodd, "there is no reason to stop our efforts now, smugly assured that we have gathered all the available scrap products so badly needed by our armed forces. Rather, we should be ashamed of ourselves for having so far turned in to the Government only those materials we no longer need nor use.

"Our contribution has been selfish and half-hearted. We have searched our cellars and attics, but not yet have the majority of us volunteered those items rich in vital matériel which, petty luxuries to us, represent the difference between life and death to our fighting men."

"You know," said Joe, "that's right. I bet—"

"For instance," Dodd went on, "on Melrose Boulevard, between 11th and 15th Streets, there are exactly forty houses. Twenty-eight of these homes have on their porches rubber mats four feet wide and ten or twelve feet long—enough rubber to make a half dozen life-rafts, or tires for three bombers!"

I SAT bolt upright, startled out of my all-too-brief lethargy.

"Hey!" I gasped. "He can't name people and places!"

"Maybe he can't," grunted Joe, "but he's doin' it."

"—a luxury to these householders," Dodd was saying earnestly, "a protection against muddy porches, true. But we can do without clean porches for a while. Our soldiers can't do without planes, tanks, guns!

"Then take the case of the X-tra-Wite Laundry. That company do-



nated several tons of junk equipment, I understand—a highly commendable contribution. But the laundry office is surrounded by a steel fence which serves no purpose. It is a purely ornamental structure four city blocks long!

"At the corner of Main and Thompson Streets the Ajax Tailoring Company—"

"Try that door again, somebody!" I howled. "This is libel! If we don't shut him up, we'll be sued for everything we've got! Stop him! Cut him off the air!"

"We can't, Bill," reminded McClary. "Remember?"

"We've got to!" I began hammering on the panes once more. But all I got for my pains was pains. Dodd didn't bat an eyelash. He went right on with his list of offenders.

And how he went on! He called his shots with deadly precision, naming companies, individuals, and numbering their homes and business locations. He attacked the city for using metal street-signs. "Stenciled legends on the curbing would be just as good—perhaps better," he claimed. He tossed one at no less a personality than the Mayor and political boss of our town. "Cast-iron deer are an eyesore on lawns. As scrap metal, they'll be an even bigger headache to the Japs." Talk about biting the hand that feeds you! He even let fly at our station. "In this very studio from which I speak are chairs. That is as it should be. WITS needs folding

I said, "Now, wait a minute, Joe. Take

chairs to seat a live audience for certain programs. But—these chairs are a most expensive luxury in times like these. They happen to be lightweight folding chairs, made out of pure aluminum!"

I sank, cowering, into my seat again. Nothing could touch me after that one. I knew, now, just what to expect. . . . *Ave atque vale*, Mr. Meighan, and get your paycheck on the way out! Old Man Griggsby—the Hon. Prendergast Griggsby to you—was not only the owner of our station but an ardent member of our listening audience. When he heard that crack—

Dodd must have talked some more. After all, he used up the remainder of his thirteen-odd minutes. But I wouldn't know about that. I heard the end of the program as through a gasp, starkly, slumped in woeful awareness that I had reached my WITS end.

THE next thing I remember was hearing the theme come up to conclude the program. Then the sound of footsteps, and many voices babbling. Al Raymond's raucous bel-low rose: "Meighan! Where's Bill Meighan—"



it easy." "Sabotage!" growled McClary. "That's what it is. I'm quittin'!"

The telephone rang. The receptionist said: "Yes sir? The Program Director? Yes, he's here. Mr. Meighan—"

I accepted the lethal instrument weakly.

"Y-yes?" I managed.

"Mr. Meighan," said a bluff voice, "this is Lawrence Wilkins, President of the X-tra-Wite Laundry Company. I just heard that Civilian Defense speaker over your station—"

I pleaded desperately:

"Listen, Mr. Wilkins, I can explain everything—"

"No need to explain, sir," said Wilkins. "The young man was absolutely right. The fence surrounding our property is a totally unnecessary ornament. I am issuing instructions that it be torn down immediately, and the scrap metal be sent to the nearest junk dealer. I trust that—er—that in some future broadcast you will mention this fact. Good day, sir!"

And he hung up. I stared at the phone dazedly. But not for long. It exploded in my face. This time a secretary said: "Station WITS? A moment, please. Mayor Thompson would like to speak to you."

An instant later Hizzoner's voice boomed, "That you, Meighan? Just

caught that program of yours. Chap was right. Confounded deer are an eyesore. I'm sending a city truck out to uproot 'em and haul 'em away. Send 'em to Japan, what?"

The connection was dead before I could gulp a reply. But the phone wasn't. The next call was the one I had feared would come. Old Man Griggsby's familiar snarl crackled in my eardrums.

"Meighan? That OCD program I just heard—"

"Boss," I piped miserably, "it was all a mistake—"

"Blasted well right! What do you fellows down there mean by keeping those aluminum chairs? I thought they'd been turned in months ago! Where's your patriotism? Now, get rid of 'em pronto, or—"

"Y-yes, sir!" I faltered feebly. "Right away sir."

I hung up and staggered right into the embrace of Al Raymond, who was one big grin on legs.

"Bill, my boy," he cried, "the program was terrific! Brilliant! Inspired! Calls have been pouring in downstairs. Individual householders and business firms volunteering scrap materials they hadn't even thought of before. Where's Oliver Dodd? I

must congratulate him as well as you—"

The spokesman for the OCD pressed forward, beaming.

"Indeed, yes! Now we understand why your city leads the nation in scrap-collection. Sheer genius! Appeal to the basic emotions. Americans rise to a challenge. Won't accept a dare. That's the stuff we need on a nationwide basis—"

BEHIND me, the door to the studios opened hesitantly and Dodd's tousled mop appeared. Beside him, white-faced but defiant, stood Loreen Raymond.

Dodd said: "Mr. Meighan—about that program—"

I drowned him out with a roar and a jab in the ribs.

"It was fine, Oliver! Beautifully done. Just as we planned it!"

He gaped at me. "Then—then you're not mad at me?"

"Mad? Why should I be? It was a grand show!"

Dodd's lean face creased into a happy smile. "Grand show!" he repeated. "Then you mean I can continue these programs, Mr. Meighan?"

What else could I do under the circumstances? I saw before me long weeks, months—years, maybe—of contact with Oliver Dodd. Inwardly I shuddered, but I forced an answering smile to my lips.

"Of course, Oliver. Three shows a week—"

"—but not," interrupted an eager voice, "over this station. Yours is too fine a program to be aired in this one small area, Mr. Dodd. We need you in Washington. We'll need your help in setting this program up on a nationwide basis—'Naming Names,' we'll call it. In every town, city and hamlet, our OCD reporters will survey the local situation, deliver an appeal modeled on your principles. You will do it, Mr. Dodd? You must. It's your patriotic duty. We simply won't take no for an answer—"

Dodd shuffled uncertainly.

"Gee!" he said. "I don't know what to say—"

"Say?" I bawled happily. "What else can you say but yes, Oliver? It's a tremendous honor."

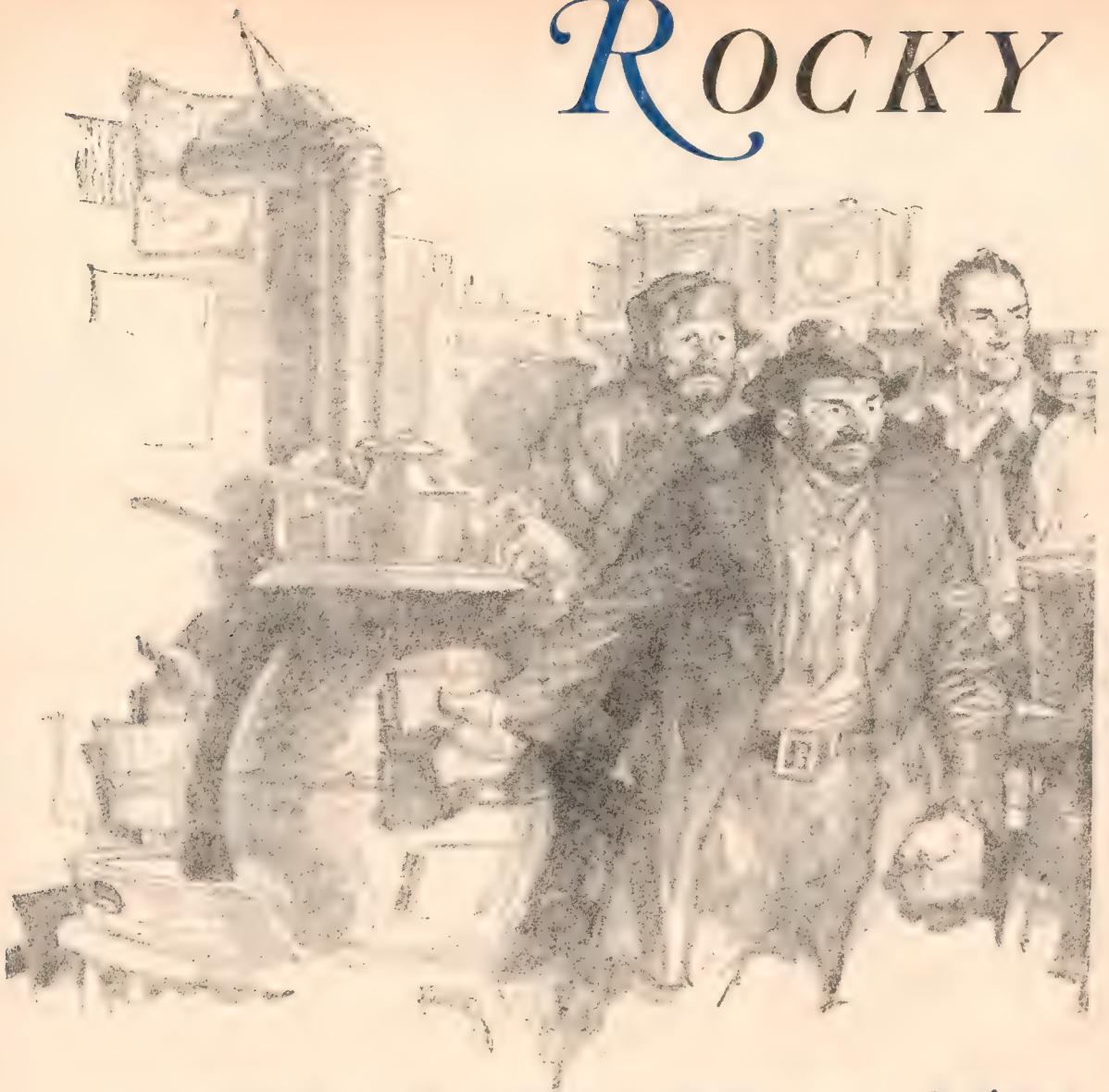
"I know, Mr. Meighan. But I hate to leave Newville. I mean, Loreen and I—"

Loreen sniffed prettily.

"Nonsense, Oliver! It doesn't matter where you work so long as we're—together. And if you go, I go too!"

And while Joe McClary grinned, and Al Raymond stared strickenly at his brand-new son-in-law-to-be, Loreen followed stage directions. She smiled and X stage R—right into Oliver's arms.

Rocky



A Novel of the North Today—by Robert

The Story Thus Far:

YOUNG BILL KENNEDY, coming to Seattle from the mining country up north, had no intention of revenging himself on the man Red Schafer, who by chicanery had cheated Bill's father Hod Kennedy of valuable mining claims.

But waiting for Bill in the crowded lobby of the hotel was an old mining promoter, "Rocky" Flynn. He offered Bill five thousand dollars to attest to an investor that Rocky and his partner Whitey Bodine had lost money in attempts to develop a mine on the shore of a tiny and remote mountain lake; and that the ore had petered out.

Bill refused flatly but when later he encountered Red Schafer and Red gave him a derisive greeting, a fight followed in an alley. Red was knocked out; his head struck a cement ledge and he was later pronounced dead.

Bill, dazed with horror, was hurried away by Rocky from the gathering crowd—was rushed to the airport and out to a big amphibian, its motors idling. Here he met Rocky's partner Whitey Bodine, and an attractive young woman introduced as Ruth MacRae the investor; Bill recognized her as a boyhood acquaintance—one of the "rich MacRaes."

Realizing he had been trapped by Rocky into a jam, Bill offered to write a report that the ore-vein was exhausted, but that a "substantial amount" had been spent on the mine; this should clear Rocky and Whitey with Ruth. Bill would not, however, return to Seattle; he would outfit here and from Luna Lake he would make it on foot for some point in the North.

Agreeing to this, Whitey and Rocky went out to purchase the necessary equipment; while waiting for their return, Ruth—who knew nothing of Bill's plans—wrote a letter to the Provincial Police, telling of her impending

MOUNTAIN



*The Sergeant said:
"Very well, then.
Fifteen minutes,
Flynn."*

Ormond Case

ing investigation of the mine; to test Bill, she asked him to mail it. He pretended to do so, but instead slid it into his pocket.

Investigation of the mine caused Bill to suspect that Whitey and Rocky had perhaps succeeded better than they wished to admit—and later Rocky reluctantly confessed to Bill that this was true—the mine was a rich one. It seemed a time of confessions: for in the mine Ruth, in tears, told Bill that the money she had sunk here was not her own—she herself was now penniless—but the capital of her aged aunts, entrusted to her for safe investment.

During the inspection of the mine, Whitey had unloaded Bill's equipment in the tiny cabin, and he now insisted on an immediate take-off.

After Bill saw the plane lift into the sky he entered the cabin: here he halted, stupefied: Whitey had left him only a sleeping-bag and an empty packsack. It was a death-sentence!

As he began dazedly to make a fire in the cabin stove, Ruth appeared at the doorway. She told him there had been "a bit of an argument" at the take-off, and as she expected a plane of the Provincial Police to arrive for her the next day if she did not return to Prince Rupert with Whitey, she had decided to remain at the mine with Bill until then.

Bill realized that she must be told the truth: he admitted he had not mailed her letter to the police; now both she and he were marooned in this inaccessible spot, their only food four sandwiches and four chocolate

bars, in the pocket of Ruth's coat, and a half-ounce of tea which Bill had found in a can on the cabin shelf. He told her of Red Schafer's death, back in Seattle, and revealed his plan to disappear into the North. Now, however, he said, he would try to make it to some point where he could notify the police to send a plane for Ruth—meanwhile she could be snug and warm in the well-fueled cabin, though she would have to go hungry for at least several days.

Ruth, aghast at the situation, accused Bill bitterly of "running a bluff," and bade him an unrelenting good-by as he started out over the icy, wind-scoured heights. But when he holed in for the night in a shallow cave at the crest of the ridge, he was touched at finding she had surreptitiously thrust the four chocolate bars into his rolled sleeping-bag.

The next day was a succession of nightmarish moments as, weakened by hunger, he traversed the dangerous ledges of ice. Near midnight, after a lengthy trial descent down a huge crevasse—a move which proved a mistake—and an exhausting hours-long return to the niche where he had left his sleeping-bag, he discovered to his utter amazement that Ruth had followed him—indeed, he found her huddled, half-frozen, in the sleeping-bag; she had come all the way from Luna Lake in one haul—and she had crawled on hands and knees, the last stretch! As they sank into a dreamless sleep, the sound of the wind sweeping across the crevasse was like Death strumming a lonely harp in the night. But to Bill all of life that was treasured, was here with him, safe and close. (*The story continues in detail:*)

THE storm strengthened before dawn, buffeting across the face of the mountain and roaring like surf in the heights. When Bill looked out in the gray twilight and saw the snow

swirling through the outer portion of the cave, his first thought was of the upper crevasse, their sole means of escape. If it was choked with snow, they were done for.

He got up at once, moving softly so as not to disturb Ruth, and laboriously climbed the chimney. The way was clear along the first stretch, though minor drifts and a driving fog of ice particles made the going difficult. He looked up past the elbow. As far as he could see, which was not far, the crevasse was scoured clean. Swirling air currents produced a vortex that allowed no large masses of snow to come to rest. It would just be a long, torturing climb—to whatever awaited up there.

He returned slowly, his every joint aching with fatigue. Yesterday's terrific haul had left its mark. Ruth's stamina must have been impaired even more by her battle across the snowfields. Yet they must get under way, and quickly. Bodily exhaustion, at this stage, was less menacing than the lowered vitality caused by starvation and cold.

When he descended to the cave, he found her up and battling with her frost-stiffened boots; she had one on and was tugging at the other. She peered at him through her tousled hair. "Darn! They're like iron."

"So were mine," he said. He shook off the loose snow and seated himself beside her. "I'll give you a hand. Brace yourself, now." He pulled it on and laced both boots for her, his fingers fumbling and stiff.

Then he placed her coat over her knees and they sat and looked at each other in the chill twilight. Both were haggard and trail-worn. She tried to push back her hair into some sort of neatness, but the cold was biting into her unprotected hands, and she gave it up with a mute, singularly pathetic glance.

"Never mind," he said, his seared lips softening. "You'll do. . . . How are you, Ruth?"

"Bill," she said, "I may have told you last night—I don't remember. But I'm glad to see you."

It was as though a ray of sunlight had touched the gloomy cavern. They smiled at each other, shivering.

"I've got a hundred questions to ask you," he said, "but we'd better get started. There's two chocolate bars left. Let's eat them first."

"I've done better than that," she said. "I brought two cans of beans—and the rest of the tea—and two tin cups. You know, in that empty knapsack you left behind. There it is, against the wall. I even brought some kindling. Wasn't that silly, carrying fuel all that distance?"

"Listen," he said. "Where did you get two cans of beans?"

"On a rock, up above the glacier. I found them there—after they were gone."

"Who?"

"Whitey and Rocky. They flew back to the lake this morning, you know. No—it's yesterday morning now. . . . This is such a strenuous life. One loses track of the days, doesn't one?"

"Miss MacRae," Bill said, in measured tones. "there's somebody a touch balmy in this household—maybe it's Bill Kennedy. . . . Whitey and Rocky flew back to the lake?"

She blinked at him. "Yes."

"You talked to them?"

"Oh, no. They thought I'd gone with you. But I was hiding in the rocks, up by the glacier. They'd burned the cabin down, and I was sure their intentions toward me weren't kindly. . . . My word, Mr. Kennedy—d'you mean to say you found me here in the bag last night, and didn't even ask why I'd come, nor anything?" She giggled. "I know—you didn't care. You were just making the best of it. Your back was cold."

"Listen," he began grimly; then halted. It could wait. Food—hot food—came first. "Sit there, my buxom lass," he told her. "I'm going to put up a windbreak and build a fire."

HE had the tarp up quickly, anchoring its lower edge with rock, wedging its upper edge into small crevasses in the ceiling against the swirling snow. He built the fire in this sheltered nook, hacked into the ice-encrusted seepage, filled the tin cups and nestled them in the flames. He opened the cans of beans, placed them on the coals and licked off the blade of his knife.

She watched him smilingly. "Appearances are deceiving, Mr. Kennedy. I'd think you were a savage if I didn't know you are a gentleman."

He bowed. "Thank you so much. Will you take charge of the tea, please?"

They dined like kings. There were no spoons for the beans, so he whittled out a brace of paddles and they scraped the cans clean. The tea was good. They ate the two chocolate bars for dessert. It wasn't enough—little more, in fact, than a snack to their wolfish hunger. Yet it comprised, literally, a new hold on life.

He had four cigarettes left in the pack. He got out two and they lit up. He was on an elbow beside her, facing the fire, and she drew him closer so that his head rested on her lap. She spread her coat over him and tucked it in. Then she leaned over him, an arm across his shoulders, looking down at the glowing coals.

The last of the wood was there. Only coals were left. Comfortable as

it was—and even the roar of the wind enhanced the sense of security here—it was only temporary. Time, as always, was on the wing.

"Okay," Bill said. "Whitey and Rocky flew back yesterday morning. You were up in the rocks by the glacier. What were you doing up there?"

"I'd gone up to look at the snowfield," she said. "I had the knapsack with me, and the kindling and stuff. But I wasn't actually going to start out across the snowfield. There was just a chance that you might be coming back. It was frightfully clear; I could see for miles. . . . But you weren't coming back. So I'd decided to find a nice crevasse in the glacier—a sort of niche where I could sit like a simple-minded little Buddha, with my hands folded, and freeze. It seemed like a nice, genteel way to die. The lake was beautiful, with the sunlight in the mist over there at the falls."

"But why? Why give up so quickly?"

"Because of a detail you overlooked, Mr. Kennedy." She brought up her hand until it rested on his head. She smoothed back his hair, ran her fingers through it and smoothed it again.

"There are men like you, you know. And there are men like Whitey Bodine. . . . Whitey had already committed two murders—he thought. Suppose he decided to polish off Rocky and come back alone?"

"Oh, no," Bill said. "Good men have tried that on old Rocky. He doesn't polish off easy."

"Not as long as he can talk himself out of it," she agreed. "And that's exactly what happened. But let me tell it, just as it happened."

She had heard the plane coming, then had seen it flashing in the sunlight over the gap, and had wedged herself into the rocks. Whitey had set the ship down on the ice just below the glacier, almost directly below where she was hiding. Whitey got out alone and went directly to the cabin. At that time, though she hadn't known it, Rocky was in the ship.

Whitey had gone up to the cabin stealthily. He'd gone in. Fortunately, she had let the fire go out hours before, trying to make up her mind what to do—meantime shedding a few tears, upon thinking about Aunt Aggie and Aunt Beth. And about Bill, and that selfish, simple-minded wench Ruth MacRae, who hadn't even let Bill kiss her good-by. . . . Anyway, the stove was cold. So Whitey hadn't known she had been gone from the cabin only a matter of minutes.

He'd come to the door and shouted to Rocky: "They've both pulled out. Come on—let's wipe the slate clean. Bring that red can with you."

So Rocky had climbed down from the ship and gone over to the cabin,

carrying the red can. It must have held gasoline, because when they ran out of the cabin presently, the cabin burned like a torch, a frightful blaze. They watched it until it began to die down—only the chimney was standing; the rest was coals—then they came over and climbed up on the ridge and looked out over the snowfield.

They were not far from where she was, and she could hear them talking. Both agreed, looking at the snowfield, that they—she and Bill—could never make it through. Whitey had been cheerful about it. He and Rocky were in the clear now; they owned the mine. They'd already made up their story about what had happened to Ruth. She had insisted on staying here with Bill, to make a complete inspection of the mine. They—Whitey and Rocky—hadn't dreamed that Bill was an utter renegade, otherwise they wouldn't have permitted her to stay here alone with him. They had found it out at Prince Rupert and hurried back—too late. Murder and suicide...

"Hm-m," Bill said. "Nice guy, Whitey! How did Rocky act?"

Rocky had been sort of gloomy. He was sorry for Bill—sorry for both of the "young ones." He'd cursed Whitey, called him a variety of nasty names. Whitey had merely showed his teeth. ... The thing that grieved him, Rocky had said, was that Bill *might* have made it through to the East Fork, if he'd only known, when he came to an "ungodly big fault," that he should go up, not down. Once on top, the first cañon on the north led to the East Fork. He could have made it to a trapper's cabin there—the trapper's name was Joe Campana, a friend of Rocky's. But no; Bill would waste a whole day going down the fault. He'd be all in, done for, by the time he got back to the ledge. ...

"That's what decided me—that wasted day. And those cans of beans. Rocky left them there, behind a boulder. I *might* catch you here. I owed it to you, and Aunt Aggie and Beth—and dear, dumb little Ruth—to try to, at least. —What's the matter, Bill?" She leaned over to look into his face. "You jumped."

"Just an idea that hit me." He inhaled deeply on his cigarette. "Wait while I wrestle with it."

If was more than an idea; it was certainty: Rocky had known she was there, crouching among the rocks beside the glacier! The signs had escaped Whitey. Her tracks had been wind-blown. Whitey had been sure that she had quitted the lake hours before.

But you couldn't fool a wolf like Rocky. He'd seen her there; he'd talked to her, warned her, encouraged her, in the guise of upbraiding Whitey.



The cabin burned like a torch, a frightful blaze. Whitey and Rocky watched not far from where Ruth was, and she could hear them talking.



"You won't have to," he said cheerfully. "Once we're on top it ought to be easier going."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

He had set out two cans of beans. In effect, he had pointed across the snowfield. "Run him down. You can do it, gal. You'll catch him at the fault."

Why? Why had Rocky engineered them into a trap that could have been fatal to both—and then risked all his winnings by pointing the way out?

"Go on," Bill said. "Rocky left the beans right there, eh? Whitey didn't see them?"

"No. Whitey had started down. Rocky took the cans out of his mackinaw—he had one in each pocket—and set them down carefully. I think he had some notion we'd find them if we came crawling back. He stood looking over the snowfield for a minute, scratching his head. Then he shrugged and followed Whitey down the bank."

"And then?"

"They went over to the mine for a while. They came back and stood by the ship, arguing. Whitey was all aroused again when he found we'd broken into the mine. But Rocky soothed him. His general argument was, what difference did it make? So they finally got in, and left. And as soon as they left—so did I."

"Across the windiest, dreariest snowfield in the Rockies," Bill said. "On the homestretch, you crawled. Thank God for these healthy, husky gals."

SHE laughed, bending over him. "The primitive types. . . . Now, what was that idea that positively staggered you?"

He debated telling her, and decided against it. It had no bearing on what immediately lay ahead. It might have, later. But they were a long way yet from Joe Campana's cabin.

"It's this," he said. "We do have a chance. If we start right now."

"Must we?" She sighed. "I suppose we should."

He came up on an elbow, but her arm held him, his cheek pressed gently against her breast. He could feel her heart beating steady and strong. He made no move, knowing that she was waiting, that her lips were ready, if he but turned to her. "Sweat blood, Kennedy," he thought, fighting an agony of longing. "There's hope—but not for you!"

"You're impossible, Bill," she whispered. "You haven't put your arm around me once. You haven't kissed me. How much crow do I have to eat?"

"We're still on the trail," he said, almost brusquely, pushing her away. "We'll discuss that down at Campana's. . . . Meanwhile, let's roll up and roll out—eh, wot?"

She released him, but did not immediately get up. She sat mutely, her chin cupped in her hands, looking down at the dying fire. Then she nodded.

"Right—as usual."

She started to get up, winced and sat down again. She extended her legs and rolled down her heavy, ragged stockings. Her knees were bruised and darkly lacerated. She touched them gently, head bent, and he saw her lips quivering.

"Good Lord!" He knelt beside her and got a folded handkerchief out of his hip pocket. He tore it in half and into quarters. Gently he taped up the bruises, knotted the frail bandages firmly, and drew back the stockings over them. "There—that'll protect them some from the wind, at least."

"It shows I'm not used to crawling," she said, as he helped her up. "Maybe I won't—any more."

IN spite of its ragged edges, Ruth's heavily lined coat was both a wind-break and warmth. High-laced boots and heavy gloves completed her armor. With her turban pulled down over her ears and her collar turned up, little more than her eyes were exposed to the driving snow.

Bill carried their meager outfit, strapped close to him. There would be a lot of climbing ahead.

"You lead off," he told her. "Take it easy, and be sure of your footing and of each hand-hold. The minute you're tired, stop and we'll take a breather. Ready?"

Both looked about the gloomy cavern. The wind swirled through it, and fine snow was already powdering the stretch of rock where their sleeping-bag had been spread. The smoke-blackened rocks of their campfire still held grudging heat. They glistened with melted snow, and the last of the embers between them popped with tiny explosions. Two empty cans stood there, side by side.

Bill gestured toward the chimney. "'Excelsior!'—and all that."

"And all that," she agreed, leading off.

They climbed slowly up the chimney, then moved in crouched position along the steep but relatively easy section that led to the first upward bend. It was not easy for Ruth; though she made no complaint, he could tell from her labored steps that each movement was torture.

They passed the elbow, and an almost sheer stretch began. Her clothes were an encumbrance here; the skirts of both coat and suit got in her way. "Dresses weren't made for this, Mr. Kennedy," she said, "and I'm afraid

you're seeing more legs than you should."

"They're good British legs," he told her. "Keep 'em climbing."

The wind was stronger, coming in savage gusts. Fine snow stung their faces, fogged the crevasse above and below; always the cold pressed in, exploring with icy fingers for joints in their armor. Except for the trail data Ruth had overheard, Bill would have looked upon this as an entirely hopeless effort. The fault might extend to the crest; but what then? Now the terrain was mapped ahead. Rocky's directions had been explicit.

That had been the most puzzling of Rocky's many puzzling gestures. Why he had done it was an enigma that seemed to have no answer. His purpose, whatever it was, might have weakened when he actually saw her huddled there in the rocks, terror-stricken. Some larger design might be back of it.

It didn't matter. Nothing mattered now except to make it to the top, then to the timber, then, if possible, to Joe Campana's cabin—if the storm and the mountains permitted.

Ruth had pushed herself too far. On an immense area of good footing—almost as big as the seat of a chair—she reeled abruptly toward the wall and would have fallen except that he clutched her quickly. They leaned back against the rock. She was so winded that each bursting breath had a moan in it.

"You've got to take it easier," he gasped. His own knees were weak and trembling. "The air's thin."

Few points on the continent were more desolate than this howling crevasse—nor, in such slippery footing, more dangerous. She turned her face from the depths and clung to him. "Bill—I'm afraid."

"It's all right, Ruth. Easy! Just look up to the sky."

Her panic passed but she still clung to him, her face upturned. The sky was thinning overhead, growing more bright. They were near the ceiling of the world.

"Bill—are we above the storm?"

"We soon will be—maybe."

She was soon breathing regularly, and she pushed away from him. "You'll think I'm a frightful baby!"

"I know you're not, my dear."

"In fact, I've a feeling we're going to make it through."

"Keep your fingers crossed," he warned.

"If so," she said, "we're getting closer to something worse than this. I'm going to fight to make you see things my way, Bill. I'm sharpening my ax."

"We won't come to that," he said, "unless we make it to Campana's. Let's go."

Hours later, so it seemed, the broad forehead of the cliff began to retreat. The going was easier with respect to the upward climb; but it was heart-breaking travel, because the gradually widening crevasse was choked with debris. The snow had ceased long since; only chill fragments of mist poured by. They saw the sun once; it peered down at them with blinding radiance, then was blotted out again.

The crevasse finally petered out. They were on a rounded dome of rock, weathered and bare. As they mounted across it, leaning into wind that seemed to blow direct from interstellar space, Bill knew that their margin was thin. They couldn't rest long, in these scoured heights. Without shelter they were done for. Only movement kept bodily temperatures up in this pitiless wind. Yet Ruth was failing fast; and her waning strength was the yardstick of their survival.

They were in blinding sunlight now, and he made her stop while they put on their goggles, their backs to the wind. Then he motioned toward the sky. The crest was in view there.

THEY made it: he saw at once, orienting himself by the sun, the way they must go toward the East Fork. They were on the highest point of a great promontory that thrust westward through the mist. Falling away on the north side, northwest, was a great glacial groove. Its bottom was choked with snow, but the living rock was exposed at the left, blown clean.

"There it is," he told her huskily.

But she held back, head and shoulders bowed, and when he tried to urge her on, she resisted him feebly. "Let me rest—a little. Please."

"Let's make it to the timber," he urged. "There's no wind there."

She was slumping down. "Sorry—"

He held her up, and in his own exhausted condition her weight seemed enormous. "Wait—wait till I get the pack off. We'll sit on it—the tarp around us."

He wriggled out of his pack, and got the folded tarp spread upon it. He lowered her there, sat clumsily beside her and got the streaming and flapping tarp about them. It protected them from the teeth of the wind. But the cold was deadly.

"Just for a minute," Bill warned. "This is bad."

They were marooned on an island above the clouds. It was an island among many and more towering islands: great peaks that sparkled and blazed against the sky as far as the eye could see. Not gray but dazzlingly white were the oceans of mist that poured majestically between.

They peered out through their flapping hood at that cold, terrible beauty.

Her back was to him, so that his body was a further protection against the booming wind. She was encircled in his arms, sheltered; but he could feel his own back congealing.

She said: "We struggle on—but why? It'll be gloomy down there. Deep snow and all that."

"Hunger and cold," he agreed. "It may be lonely, even." He held her close, his arms across her breast, and she held his chilled hand tightly pressed to her. "So what, Ruth?"

"We're not primitive types," she said. "It isn't just the urge to survive. I can prove it."

"Prove it fast, then."

"I didn't bring those beans and that kindling across the snowfields for Ruth MacRae. No, nor for Aunt Aggie and Aunt Beth. Why, do you suppose?"

"Because you're a brave woman."

"It was because I was afraid I'd lost you. And you wouldn't be here, except for me." She leaned her head back, so that her turban pressed against his helmet strap, and their cheeks touched. "I'm going to use the ax now. D'you mind?"

"Hew to the line," he said. "But fast."

"It's a little late to inquire about this detail. There's no other woman?"

"No," he said. "There never was. None but you, my dear."

"Did you mean it back there at the lake, when you said, 'It was because I loved you?'"

"Yes."

"Well, then," she said. "You're a fighter. You have courage. I have too, haven't I?"

"You're also a gambler," he said. "Each minute we sit here means an hour less at the end."

"I'll hurry, then. —Why not go back to Seattle and face your difficulties there? Under the circumstances, isn't there a chance that the jury would be lenient? Isn't *any* chance worth while? . . . You know where I'll be, of course. Jogging along—as usual. I'll have the means to see it through. . . . I'm using that ax, Bill. With all my strength and all my heart! Well?"

He said nothing for a moment. They swayed as one, splitting the wind like a rock in a current.

Then he said: "You've whittled me down, my dear. At least we'll discuss it." It came hard. He had never lied to her before. "After we're well-fed and warm."

"Can't you say it now?"

"It'll jinx us. We're not in the clear yet. There's a better place than this. . . . If we make it."

"I know," she said, beginning to shiver. "C-Campana's. Darn that man! Why didn't he build his cabin closer?"

At first their embattled descent was easier than their struggle toward the crest. Then the groove deepened and narrowed into a turbulent cañon down which the wind roared like a tide. The terrain grew rougher underfoot. At dusk, when they came to timberline, four thousand feet lower and many miles westward, the grim part of it began.

The stunted spruce broke the force of the wind, as Bill had hoped, but drifts trailing the dwarfed trees were heartbreaking barriers. Deep snow must be avoided at all costs. Ruth's failing stamina could not have withstood two hundred yards of it. Exposed ledges and scoured ridges had to be followed, involving long detours. Boulders in the creek-bed were ice-encrusted and bruising.

The creek itself had begun as a mere trickle, muttering under drifts and ice. It was now a robust stream that burst into the open at intervals, roared over a jump-off, then slid again under a drifted sheath. It, too, was an increasing hazard. Again and again an abrupt cliff forced them to cross to the opposite bank—always in the deepening rapids, in open water. Some of the ice was mush; all of it was dangerous. Clear ice meant depth below. Bill cut a spruce limb for Ruth and she leaned heavily upon it. He was himself weak-kneed and stumbling. Both were snow-whitened to the hips, their boots encrusted with frozen spray. The clouds seemed to be thinning overhead, so that near-by objects were visible in the darkening gorge. Bill searched the bank for some marker that would indicate the upper end of Campana's trap-line.

THEY came to a narrow flat that was only a vague white strip in the gloom. No willows grew on it; summer floods kept it scoured clean. A lone spruce was rooted in the bank at the left, and Bill detoured by it, with Ruth plodding blindly at his heels. The tree bore two blazes: one waist-high, the other some six feet higher, above snow level.

He leaned against the tree, too spent to feel other than an inner turmoil of dim, conflicting emotion. This must be Campana's trail. If so, it was the edge of life. The bitter mountains were behind them now. . . . He explained the significance of the markers to Ruth. She was leaning against him, gripping her stick, her head bowed on her arms.

She said, with weary apathy: "I hope the cabin's warm. How do we know we'll be welcome?"

"You don't know old-timers like Campana," he told her. "He'd shoot us if we tried to get by."

He didn't tell her that it might still be miles away. . . .

He almost carried her on the last stretch. The cabin was up on a bench, looking out through the timber, and courage alone couldn't take her up the short slope from the creek. He brought her left arm across his shoulders, grasped her sagging body in the crook of his right arm, and mounted step by laborious step to the threshold. Lights twinkled through the trees far below, but she didn't see them.

There was a note nailed to the door. Turning it toward the west, he read:

Henry: I me over to kettlemans on wolf creek. Be back friday. Move in ore come over to kettlemans and help us kill 3 gallons squareface.

Campana

Beneath was a different scrawl:

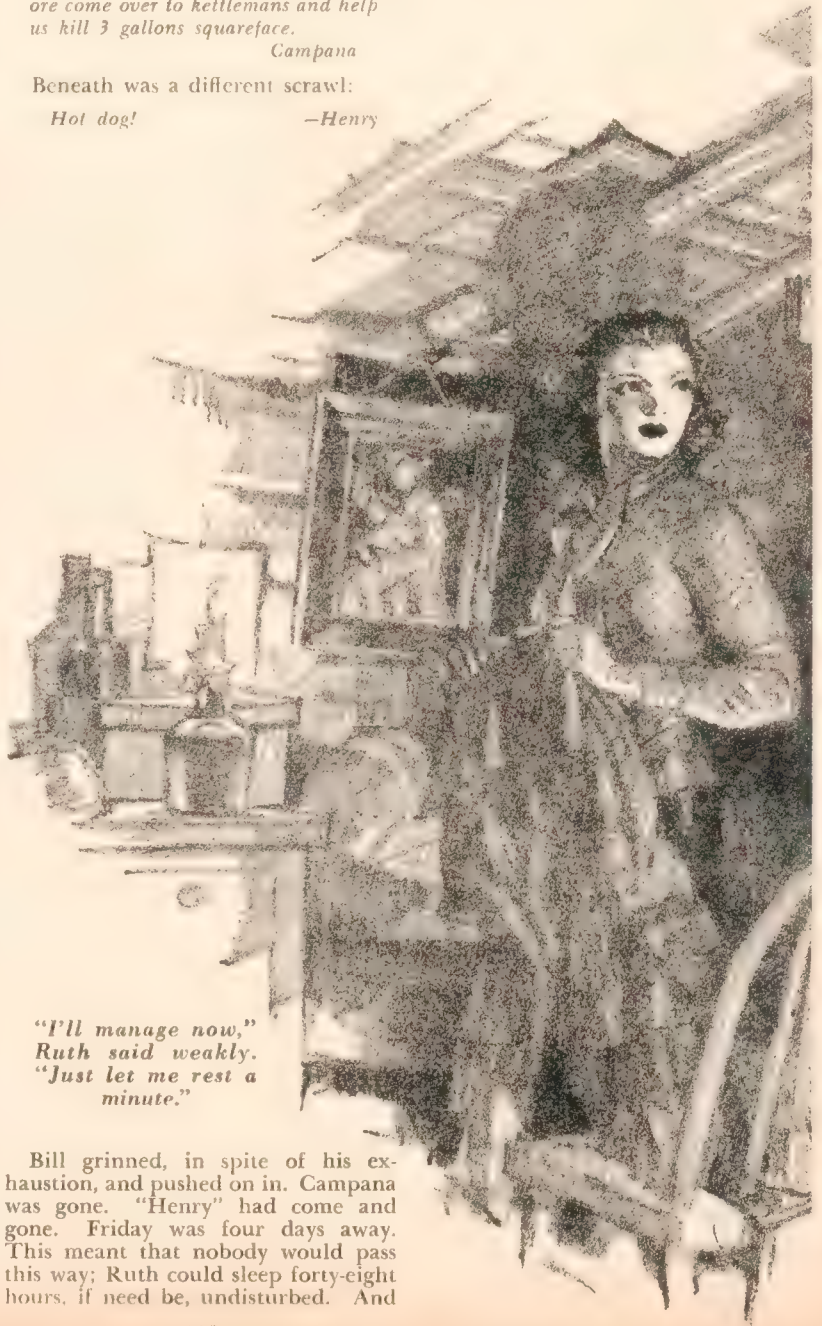
Hot dog!

-Henry

the lights of the tiny settlement seemed to be less than two miles away. . . .

He lowered Ruth to a vague, bulky chair, found a bracket-lamp on the wall and lighted it. He got his pack off, staggering drunkenly, and looked about the large but snug room.

It was an old-timer's dream. Many trappers lived in squalor, malodorous and prideless, but not Joe Campana. Though much equipment hung on the west wall in orderly confusion—skis, snow-shoes, parkas, scores of traps—the place was clean throughout. Bearskin



*"I'll manage now,"
Ruth said weakly.
"Just let me rest a
minute."*

Bill grinned, in spite of his exhaustion, and pushed on in. Campana was gone. "Henry" had come and gone. Friday was four days away. This meant that nobody would pass this way; Ruth could sleep forty-eight hours, if need be, undisturbed. And

rugs were on the floor, and the chair where Ruth sat slumped, head back and snow-whitened boots extended, was given softness by the pelt of a half-grown cub. Bunks were built into twin alcoves flanking the huge fireplace. Earthenware pots and pans gleamed at the kitchen end.

Bill got wood from the kitchen bin and built a roaring fire in the fireplace. There was food direct from dreams on

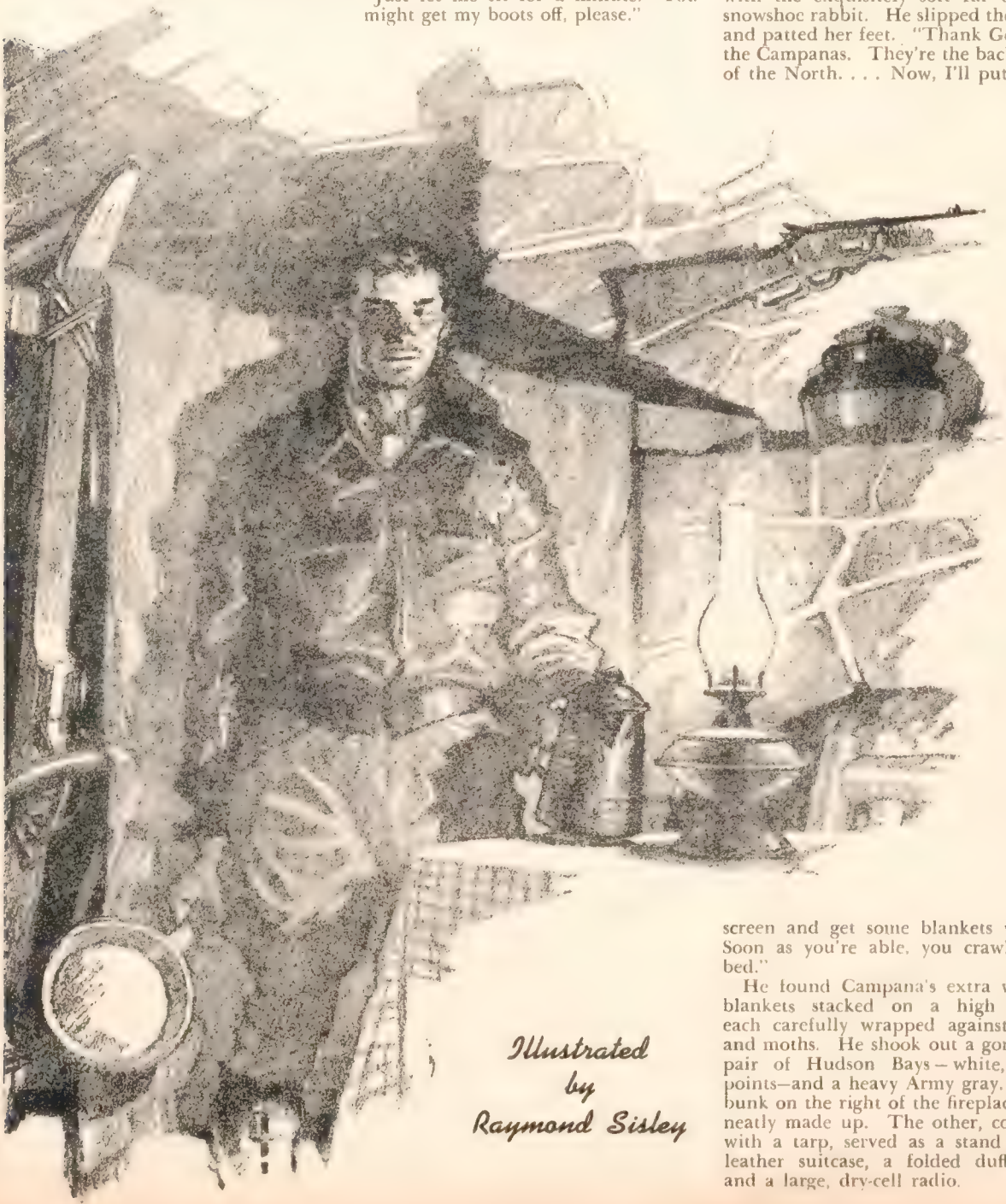
the wall shelves—quantities of canned goods, bacon, staples in square containers. He eyed the array wolfishly, but Ruth needed attention first.

She was almost out, unable to stand alone. He helped her out of her chill armor—her coat and the jacket of her suit. Her heavy sweater was impregnated with snow, and the ragged hem of her skirt was encrusted with ice.

"I'll manage now," she said weakly. "Just let me sit for a minute. You might get my boots off, please."

He knelt at her feet and got them unlaced, his aching hands warming slowly to life. He unrolled her ragged woolen stockings carefully over her bruised knees. Her feet were white and lifeless. "Keep them away from the fire," he warned. "They're not frozen, but they're liable to hurt plenty. . . . Wait, better put on those moccasins."

They were native moccasins, lined with the exquisitely soft fur of the snowshoe rabbit. He slipped them on and patted her feet. "Thank God for the Campanas. They're the backbone of the North. . . . Now, I'll put up a



*Illustrated
by
Raymond Sisley*

screen and get some blankets warm. Soon as you're able, you crawl into bed."

He found Campana's extra winter blankets stacked on a high shelf, each carefully wrapped against dust and moths. He shook out a gorgeous pair of Hudson Bays—white, four points—and a heavy Army gray. The bunk on the right of the fireplace was neatly made up. The other, covered with a tarp, served as a stand for a leather suitcase, a folded duffle-bag and a large, dry-cell radio.

Using two skis as supports—one wedged upright through the back of a chair, the other extending across to the mantel—he walled off the kitchen side from the fireplace and bunk, using the gray blanket as a screen. He hung the four-points one to absorb the heat, and dragged Ruth's chair closer into the niche.

"There you are. Don't sit too long; get your clothes off and hang them up on the screen to dry. Then crawl in, as is." He stood looking down at her. "My compliments, Miss MacRael. You jogged along."

Her eyes were closed, but her wan, flushed cheeks dimpled a little.

"Thank you, sir. When do—we eat? And what?"

"In about sixteen minutes. Mulligan—flapjacks—bacon—coffee."

"I should be doing all this. And I should be telling you—things."

"In the morning," he said. "We eat first, then sleep the clock around. . . . This is where we were heading for, my dear. There's lots of time now."

He took off his leather jacket, but not his boots. Let them thaw as they were; they'd soon be hitting drifts again. . . . He built a fire in the kitchen stove, put on the kettle, dragged the "mulligan" pot forward, sliced bacon and tossed it into a skillet. He mixed up flapjacks, a big batch, and opened canned corn and peaches. "I owe you five million, Campana," he thought. "I'll leave five bucks."

While waiting for the skillet, he stood at the window, looking out toward the lights of the Meadows. They twinkled frostily. The vast expanse of the mountain meadow between was like a white, frozen lake. He could make it in a half hour, if the drifts weren't too deep on the flats. They probably weren't. The snowfall here was lighter than up in the higher country.

"As soon as she's asleep, Kennedy," he thought. "No debate—no good-bys. Just close the door gently behind you!"

CHAPTER NINETEEN

HE dragged up a box beside her bunk and spread their banquet upon it. She was almost asleep, swathed like a cocoon, but the aroma of the food awakened her. She came up on an elbow, tossing back her tousled hair, and arranged the heavy blankets about her so that little more than her face and one bare arm was visible.

"Blow out the lamp," she pleaded. "The light from the fireplace is enough. Something tells me the future Mrs. Kennedy isn't looking her best."

He blew out the lamp, came back and seated himself gravely. She was

in the shadow now, he in the flickering light. He poured her coffee. "I know you take your tea straight," he said. "How about coffee?"

She stifled a yawn. "One teaspoon, please. Just a touch of cream. . . . You didn't hear my last observation, I take it?"

"Sorry it's canned cream," he said, beaming at her. "Yes, I heard you. Flapjacks first? Or mulligan?"

"Mulligan, darn it," she said. "My word—look at that bacon! Bill, d'you mind if I take it in my fingers and start snapping at it?"

When the meal was over,—and it was a regal interval,—Ruth lay back, heavy-lidded, her head pillowed on her arm. "It's a foul plot," she asserted. "Now I'm stuffed, and I can't possibly keep my eyes open. But I promise you, Mr. Kennedy—"

"Quiet," he said. "Wait till I clear the table."

Later, she roused. "Don't touch the dishes. I'll do them in the morning."

"They're almost done," he said.

When he came back into the circle of firelight, she was still fighting to keep awake. She turned her face toward him with a tremendous effort. Her lips scarcely moved. "Bill—"

"Wait till I get the other bunk cleared off," he said.

"I can't stop to debate it, son," Rocky said. "You got all your life to figure it."



He moved the screen back a little and went through the motions of clearing the bunk. He left the radio there, and when he saw that she was asleep at last, drew up a low stool, and began manipulating the dials.

The type of radio was strange to him, but he soon had it turned on. He caught a station faintly, tuned in and bowed his head on his arms, listening. It was a voice from the outside world, coming thinly but clearly through the void. There was an outside world!

"Who's talking?" Ruth whispered.

"Hush," he said. "It's the radio—some news-commentator down at Vancouver. He's describing the scene in London today. Chamberlain's back from Munich—"

She was asleep—this time for good, he knew. He bowed his head again, listening, waiting for her to sink into such a complete coma that she could not be roused.

The news itself meant little. Just more world politics. Power politics half a world away. It would never touch this hemisphere. . . . The crowds

at the station had been quite hysterical, the commentator related in his unemotional way. The police had held them back. Chamberlain had smiled at them, had said: "Hitler has no further territorial ambitions. We can rely upon his assurances. We have found peace in our time—"

Bill thought: "*She's asleep, now.*"

The murmur of the radio was soothing. He didn't know that he had fallen asleep, leaning there, until he was suddenly wide awake. It was as

should have additional reports. Also, Downing Street announces that Mr. Chamberlain will outline in Parliament tomorrow the essential details of the historic meeting at Munich—"

Bill turned it off and for a moment sat hunched and motionless. The news announcement had brought no major change to his own destiny. It had merely simplified the pattern a little, speeded up the loom. The only surprise in it was old Rocky Flynn. Why had Rocky turned on Whitey



casual as though the flickering walls had spoken his name, and Ruth's. . . . He listened, scarcely daring to breathe, wishing mightily that he could turn back the radio like a phonograph record, and hear what had gone before.

BUT the clipped, unemotional voice went on:

"As a result of these admissions, both Flynn and Bodine are in custody at Prince Rupert, charged with fraud, abduction and attempted murder. The Provincial Police flew up to Luna Lake today and found the cabin burned, as Flynn had claimed, and no clue as to the whereabouts of the missing pair. It is reported at Prince Rupert that the police again took off by plane this evening, supposedly flying up to the East Fork of the Finlay, where they will be in readiness to search the terrain to the north, the moment a mountain storm in the region permits.

"And that, ladies and gentlemen, brings our information on the Luna Lake affair up to the present. Be sure to listen to our next news broadcast, at ten-thirty tomorrow, when we

when big winnings were in their grasp, free and clear?

The winnings were the key to it, probably: on the way back from the lake some lurid showdown had come over a division of the loot. Perhaps the whole pot, and Rocky's scalp, had been at stake. Something had driven him to rush to the police for protection—a bitter pill for Rocky to swallow. Yet he'd be out of character if he hadn't figured out some edge, somewhere along the line, as usual, for Rocky Flynn.

It didn't matter. All that mattered now was that the Provincial Police had already left Prince Rupert by plane, heading for the East Fork. They were in the air now. They'd probably show up here before midnight. This meant that Bill Kennedy must lash his battered, bone-weary, apathetic body to a last effort: Get down to the settlement; buy, borrow or steal a dog-team and equipment; head north—well into the clear—before the ship set down.

And there was no use dallying here, basking in warmth and comfort and synthetic hope, with a chore to be done.

He got up, moving woodenly, and got into his jacket and helmet. He stirred the pack with his toe and left it there. It was a long haul across the flat. If he could wangle a dog-team he could manage a complete trail outfit as easily. He'd carried this load, any load, long enough.

He glanced about the cabin, drawing on his gloves. The log smoldered in the fireplace. There was no danger of flying sparks. Ruth was sound asleep. Win, lose or draw, she was safe here, which was all that truly mattered. . . . He could leave word at the settlement. They'd be over for her tomorrow.

Her face was to the wall; only the top of her dark head was visible against the immaculate whiteness of the blankets that enfolded her. He didn't go near her, but crossed directly to the door, opened it and stepped outside. He paused on the threshold, while the cold bit into his face. It was easy enough to plan with iron purpose; to say in thought: "No argument, my dear; no debate; no good-by." To do it came hard. Something craven and weak-kneed and yearning held him chained for an instant, hoping she would waken and call to him.

She didn't waken or call, and he closed the door behind him as he had planned—gently.

THERE were drifts on the flat, and he stumbled through them, head lowered but eyes raised to the sky. The moonlit snow wavered before him and the stars were both brilliant and blurred, as though he looked out through goggles splashed with rain. He had grown warm in the cabin, and now the cold brought tears to his eyes. Beneath the snow was a crust of brittle ice. As he clumped through it, the wind quartering at his back, the sound of his progress rolled and reverberated through the frosty night.

The settlement took form as a large building with flanking cabins, all fronting on the river. The East Fork was a sizable river here at the Meadows. It had a bend at the left, and at this side of the bend an airplane stood on its skis like a big black mosquito. All the cabins strung out to the right were lit.

Dogs were making a vast uproar as he circled the store. It came from the right, up the street between the buildings and the low docks. A dog-team was harnessed there. Helpers were hazing the strays back. Against a lighted doorway down the line a man was momentarily silhouetted, wriggling into his parka.

Four men were grouped about the big heater in the back of the store, all in silhouette against a bracket-lamp on the farther wall. One was in uniform—a trooper in the winter pacs and

"Where's Flynn?" Sergeant Henshaw demanded.



service parka of the Provincial Police. None turned around as Bill came forward. The trooper made way for him as Bill moved into the circle beside him.

A lively debate was in progress. The trooper was doubtful about ground search being effective unless and until the plane spotted Kennedy and Miss MacRae. No search could be carried out until morning. The old-timers held that dog-teams should be on the ground without delay. The storm was folding up. They should be at timberline by dawn. The plane could spot the young ones up on the snow-fields, maybe, and then signal to the ground crew. Kennedy and the gal would have to be freighted out anyway, if they were still alive. . . .

The speaker fell silent, looking hard at Bill. The trooper turned his head to look at him. A gaunt man at the right—the storekeeper, probably—stared at him under bushy brows.

Bill had taken his gloves off, spread his hands to the heat. He had made up his mind between the door and the stove. Ruth was in the clear now. He'd already traveled too fast, too far. He'd frozen enough, starved enough,

had his share of loneliness and futility. As far as any further chores on behalf of Bill Kennedy were concerned, the hell with it.

He said wearily, smiling a little: "No need for a search, boys. I'm Kennedy. Miss MacRae is safe at Campana's."

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE four stared at him, and each other. One of the old-timers, across the stove from Bill, was of the lean and withered type, his bald head projecting from his parka like a startled turtle. He seemed to grow in height. The whole room reeled. . . .

When Bill opened his eyes, after a moment of blackness, he was seated with legs extended toward the stove. The storekeeper was bending over him, tin cup in hand. The two old-timers—one was a stocky man, heavy-jowled—were peering at him.

"Can you swallow, laddie? Take a sip, then."

Bill took a swallow which burned and seared, and pushed the cup away. Long ago, it seemed, in the hotel at

Seattle, he'd tasted that stuff. It was associated with grief.

"Thanks," he said. He was a little mortified. "I'm all right. My knees just folded up for a minute."

"Sure they did. Yeah. . . . So the gal's all right, hey? Not frost-bit nor nothin'?"

"Just tired—all in." Bill looked about him. "Wasn't there a trooper here?"

"He'll be back in a moment," said the storekeeper. "He's gone after Sergeant Henshaw and Rocky Flynn. They'll be wanting to question you."

"Rocky's here?" Bill wasn't surprised, somehow.

"The police brought him along, to help in the search. He knows the country up there. . . . Wait, laddie. There's no time to be lost." The storekeeper was unhurried but wasted no words. "I'm McPherson; I knew your father. So did these two gentlemen. This one is Weatherby. This—" he indicated the turtle-necked one—"is Crim. —Very well, Crim."

"Look, Kennedy." Crim eyed Bill with intentness. "Rocky's been talking fast since he hit camp awhile ago, while John Law wasn't listening. He's heading for the pen, and knows it, but this *might* be the pure quill. . . . He claims he figured this Luna Lake deal from the first to do you a good turn—on account of Hod. He had to take long chances, with Whitey Bodine on his neck, but he gambled you and the gal would make it through. What's your theory?"

Bill grinned apathetically. "He did me a good turn?"

"You're here," Weatherby pointed out. "The gal's safe at Campana's."

"Look," Crim said. "His talk's bigger than that. He claimed that if you made it through, he's ready to carry the load. So you and the gal—"

"They're coming," McPherson cut in as a strengthening clamor was ap-

proaching outside. "Two questions should get to the heart of it, gentlemen. The killing—and grub. . . . Laddie, what about that killing in Seattle?"

"I did it," Bill said. "That's why I'm here."

McPherson nodded, with a guarded glance at the others.

"He claims he left some grub for you at the lake. How much, if any?"

"Two cans of beans," Bill said.

This seemed to brush aside all doubt. "That's enough for me, by the eternal!" Crim said. "This once, Rocky's on the level. . . . Watch the fall of the cards, Weatherby. I'll get the dogs lined out."

He hurried away, pushing through the crowd thronging in at the door.

BILL got to his feet with an effort and leaned his back against the counter, facing the crowd. This was the public; this was society, to whom he owed his debt. Sergeant Henshaw, the law, was in the lead, with the trooper at his right. Bill remembered him—tall and severe—from the docks at Prince Rupert.

At Henshaw's left was Rocky Flynn.

Curiously, as the little man approached, his battered hat pushed back and his chest expanded confidently. Bill felt no animosity toward him. He was merely touched with a vague, bitter amusement that any man living could run such a bluff in the face of the record. Every old-timer in the room knew who and what Rocky was. He was under arrest now, the bill-collector at his side; all his black and seamy past strode with him as he advanced.

Yet his manner was that of one hero rushing to meet another while lesser men looked on, touched and understanding. He seized Bill's hand and beamed up at him, his ragged mustache quivering. As an act, it was masterly. His pale blue eyes were actually misty under their shaggy brows.

"Doggone!" he breathed. "Doggone, boy—this here's an occasion! Shore, you made it through! What did I tell you—all? Some of you salty gents knew Hod Kennedy. Aint this boy a block off the old chip?" He peered about him. "Where's ol' Samson Crim?"

"Putting his dogs away. He'll be along in a minute."

"Where's Weatherby?"

"Helping him."

"Okay, boys." Rocky had appointed himself master of ceremonies. "Fire questions, when ready. The boys want to know how you done it, Bill. Then you and I'll chin a little in private. After that, the law takes over. Eh, Henshaw?"

"That's the understanding," the Sergeant agreed coldly.

There was no question about the interest of the crowd. They themselves had threaded snowfields and bitter peaks. Yet Bill sensed mystery here. Poker-players all, these old boys were awaiting the fall of the nameless cards. He was sure of it, when Weatherby entered the store and sidled unobtrusively into the group, his eyes fixed vacantly on Rocky. Everyone except the two officers seemed to recognize a cue.

"Okay, boys," Rocky said. "He's mine now. Official wheels have got to grind on. Come along, Bill."

Bill heaved away from the counter with an effort. The crowd made room.

The Sergeant halted them. "One moment, please! It's not only fair but your legal right, Kennedy, that you understand your position. Flynn is under arrest for fraud, abduction and attempted murder. His partner, Bodine, is under custody at Prince Rupert on the same charge. We also have advices from Seattle asking for your arrest, and Flynn's, on a charge of murder. Flynn has admitted the local charges. He says he can produce a confession covering the Seattle affair. That's the purpose of his private talk with you. . . . Is that clearly understood?"

"Certainly—" Bill began. He had intended to say: "Certainly I'll confess. It's fact." But Rocky had his arm in an affectionate grasp, and Rocky's fingers pressed warningly. "It's all right," Bill concluded.

"Very well, then. Fifteen minutes, Flynn."

Rocky beamed at the crowd. "No snooping around, you rats. Stay right here. Who's got the best cabin, where we can set and rest our shoulder-blades?"

"Mine," said Weatherby.

"Is the fire lit?" Rocky demanded.

"How about foot-warmers? When we drink your hooch, have we got to use tin cups?"

"Get along," said Weatherby, grinning.

A fire was going in Weatherby's fireplace. Bill sat down at once, but Rocky went directly to the cupboard and came back with a bottle and two tin cups. Bill waved them away.

"Not for me, old son. I drank with you once before!"

"Shush," Rocky said, listening. "D'you suppose ol' Samson Crim has got his ear to the back door? Curious critter, that Crim."

He went to the back door, which opened upon a stoop ricked high with wood. He went out, closing the door behind him, and presently was back.

"It's colder than blazes," he said.

Detouring by the wall, he hung up his battered hat, first removing an ancient fishhook attached to the crown.

There were several parkas hanging there, one of heavy winter fur. Rocky took off his mackinaw, took a large envelope from the inner pocket, and put on the winter parka. He pulled the hood forward, attached the fishhook to its peak, just back of the bristling wolverine fur, then pushed the hood back.

"That there fishhook's for luck," he said, coming to the table. "I've carried it for seventeen years. Maybe it'll pay off."

He laid the envelope on the table and took up the bottle. Bill watched him, heavy-lidded. Rocky was building up toward some dramatic moment. He'd have done it on the gallows.

"Three minutes gone," he said. "Four to go. I need eight minutes' edge." He poured the first drink. "I'm going to tell you something, Bill. Then we'll drink together."

"Not me," Bill said.

"We'll drink to Hod Kennedy," Rocky said. "Listen, first." He poured the second drink and took it with him to the fireplace. He leaned there, facing Bill. His forehead glistened a little.

"John Law's tough on this side of the line, Bill. Once I'm inside, looking out, I'm done for. Too old that-a-way. I could admit to a dozen killings and it would be no skin off my nose a-tall. Because I'd never serve out my time, and I'd never come to trial on any other count. You following me?"

Bill nodded. "What are you trying to sell me, Rocky?"

Rocky looked down at his cup, his mustache spreading. "What am I trying to sell him, he says! Nothing, but all you've dreamt about, son—for which you've frozen and starved! Them marble halls, and all that. . . . Wait—open up that there envelope. Read what's inside; but read fast."

IT was a single page, written in a cramped, illiterate but entirely legible hand—Rocky's hand—and it was witnessed by Samson Crim and Joel Weatherby. In it, Rocky had described clearly and positively how he had killed a certain Red Schafer, in an alley adjacent to DeSilva's, in Seattle. He had been in the act of rifling Schafer's pockets when his supposed victim had come suddenly to life and grappled with him. Whereupon he had struck down the said Schafer with a short length of pipe that happened to be lying near by. Unfortunately, this had killed Schafer.

Bill read it through twice, puzzled but beginning to get it. He recalled now that Samson Crim had said: "Rocky claims he's ready to carry the load."

He looked at Rocky and shook his head. He couldn't help but soften a

little. Grandstand or not, it was a heart-warming scheme.

"I can't stop to debate it, son," Rocky said. "You got all your life to figure it. Me, I got two minutes. . . . I'm entitled to this much of a break."

"Break?" Bill repeated. "You want me to let you shoulder it all—and you call it a break?"

"And I'll tell you why," Rocky said. "There's two reasons. The first is Hod Kennedy. When we drank together I said I'd pay off. It was a promise.

The second is, I want to pass out big. I don't hope to have folks remember me like they do Hod Kennedy—I aint entitled to that. All I want 'em to say—like ol' Samson Crim and Joel Weatherby, for instance—is something like this: 'He was the crookedest snake that ever lived. He'd cheat you out of your eyeteeth. But on the last play, he laid it on the line.' D'you get it now?"

Bill shook his head. In spite of himself, he was deeply touched. "I'd never feel right about it. A bluff like this might fool the authorities—"

"Wait," Rocky pleaded. His face glistened with perspiration, and it was not altogether from the heat of the fire. "Just you set here and think it over. I'll go and tell the Sarge that you're all set and in the clear. He don't have to hold you for Seattle now. But you just set and figure till he comes. You'll have eight minutes. . . . Meanwhile, one quick drink."

He indicated Bill's cup, but Bill made no move. "You and I are square, old son. But you risked Ruth's life. You hurt her. She crawled along a ledge, with her knees bleeding."

"Okay," Rocky said. "Two minutes more. Maybe it's worth it. . . . She's a good gal, Bill. If I hadn't roped you in, Whitey'd have persuaded her to fly up to the lake, alone—and he'd have come back alone! Think that over. Her knees will heal again. . . . I was out of my depth with Whitey. I seen you in action with Red Schafer—and him wearing brass knuckles! When I seen you was sweet on her, it was a natural."

"Sounds good," Bill said. "But weren't you also figuring in a little edge for Rocky Flynn?"

"It didn't work. It's taken me dang' near a half century to find out that two things like that don't mix. When you figure to be a Santa Claus, you got to go whole hawg or none. The way things broke up there at the lake, all I could do was gamble you'd make it through—and then lay Whitey by the heels. Cutting my own throat, meanwhile. . . . Think it over. I was in the clear when me and Whitey left the lake. You needed a little luck, of course—who doesn't?"

He indicated Bill's cup. "Wet your whistle! —No, don't get up."

Bill came to his feet with a tremendous effort, nevertheless. Rocky was a salesman: the moment had drama. There was some truth in his lines, at that. Joel Weatherby had stated it simply: "You're here. The gal's safe at Campana's."

Rocky raised his cup.

"It was a long haul," he said, blinking. "But I made it. . . . Sleep sound, Hod—where there ain't any frost and the wind don't blow."

The wind was sweeping across the roof. Bill barely moistened his lips, then set his cup down and seated himself heavily. Rocky drank deep, coughed, stamped on the floor and pulled the hood of his parka forward.

"Thanks for your offer," Bill said, yawning. "You meant all right. . . . Give my regards to that squaw up on the Dease. A good trapper and wood-splitter, wasn't she?"

"Shush," said Rocky, nodding. "Name of Luna. . . . But I'm heading across Sifton Pass. Remember that." He sidled toward the door. "Give that affidavit to the Sarge, Bill. Remember now: Even if you tell him you think it's phony."

"Okay," Bill said.

"So long, son," said Rocky, from the door.

"Luck," Bill said.

Rocky went out the front door, and almost immediately old Samson Crim entered from the back. He peered about him, sidling over toward the fireplace. "Aint Rocky here?"

"He said he was going over to the store," Bill told him.

There was the sound of a dog-team getting under way: muffled snarlings, low-toned commands. Sled-runners creaked, dwindled. It was hard to tell in the wind, but the direction seemed to be north.

"That's funny," Crim said. "Sounded like somebody pulling out—but it couldn't be. Mine's the only real dog-team in camp, and you heard me putting them away." He beamed guardedly at Bill. With his parka hood pushed back, he looked more than ever like a benevolent turtle. "Well, I'll get over to the store."

Bill was sitting there, staring at the fire, when Sergeant Henshaw and the trooper burst in.

"Where's Flynn?" Henshaw demanded.

Bill yawned. "Isn't he over at the store? He left here all of six minutes ago."

Both officers dashed out through the rear door. The Sergeant's angry voice rosc:

"He's gone—with Crim's dogs! Rout out the camp! We'll start after him at once."

Then the Sergeant strode back alone, his face grim and forbidding.

"I hope you're not a party to this, Kennedy."

Bill blinked at him. "He made a run for it?"

"And somebody," the Sergeant assured him, "will sweat for it."

"Maybe this will shed some light on it," Bill said, extending Rocky's affidavit.

Henshaw snatched the paper and read it. He read it again, nodding. "Well!" he said. "This is better, I must say; even though the rascal made a run for it." He inserted the letter in a leather folder. "We'll round him up, of course. . . . This clears you, Kennedy."

"No," Bill said heavily. "That confession doesn't mean a thing."

"On the contrary," Henshaw said, crossing to the front door. "It fits in precisely with our advices from Seattle."

The camp was in a joyous turmoil. Men dashed here and there, shouting like boys at a circus. They pursued dogs up the street and back again. They collided with each other, fell sprawling in their alleged excitement. A blind man could have seen through this synthetic bedlam. Henshaw stood at the door, cursing softly and with futile emphasis. The trooper dashed up.

"They're stalling, Sergeant. It'll take them an hour to get under way. He has the best dogs. They claim there isn't another trained team in camp."

"Call them off," the Sergeant snapped. "Tell them to assemble here at once." He backed into the room, glancing at his wrist-watch. "My word—I'll never live this down! I should have kept the man in irons. . . . As for you, Kennedy, I can't understand why—"

"Wait," Bill said; he was up, leaning heavily on the table. "What d'you mean—it fits in with advices from Seattle?"

"Precisely that, sir. They've gathered evidence on the exact manner in which Schafer was murdered. This confession substantiates it in every particular." The Sergeant looked keenly into his face. "Sit down, man." He spoke in more kindly vein. "It's all right. In your condition you couldn't have stopped Flynn, in any case. I realize he was a friend of your father's and all that. It's this blighted camp that took me in completely. . . . Sit down, sir."

Bill did so, his head swimming.

"Sergeant," he said, "be patient with me. Just for a minute. —What evidence? How was Schafer killed?"

Old-timers were crowding in, puffing and innocent-eyed. Henshaw scowled at them, leaning over Bill.

"The complete file's at Prince Rupert," he said. "I remember the major

points. Their first request was to hold you for investigation. Then a second, more detailed report came. It seems that some friend of yours, a manager, I believe, of some prominent hotel—"Sam Packard," Bill agreed.

"That's the name—Packard. Packard found some discrepancy between the story you told him, and the police theory. You had told him that you struck Schafer with your fist, knocking him down, and that Schafer's head struck the wall, killing him. But Schafer's skull was fractured in the frontal area, by a blunt instrument. They found the instrument in some junk-yard near by, where Flynn had obviously tossed it—a short length of pipe. . . . Very well, gentlemen." He turned on the crowd. "Shut the door, please."

Bill heard the discussion only vaguely. The Sergeant accused them of obstructing the law. They loudly denied it, in mass and in detail. Weatherby admitted that Rocky had asked about the trail to Sifton Pass, whether there'd been any snow-slides beyond the big bend. He, Weatherby, had thought Rocky merely to be in reminiscent mood. . . .

Bill recalled that Schafer's hat had been over his face, as he lay there in the alley, while the police had been taking notes. His skull could have been crushed in front. And Rocky had suggested, before the fight started: "There's some short lengths of pipe over in that junk. Best slip one into your pocket for percentage." And he, Bill, had said airily: "Oh, no, Rocky. We're gentlemen—" *Good Lord—had Rocky actually killed Schafer?*

Sergeant Henshaw said: "Sifton Pass, eh? That means he'll be over in the Mackenzie before we can head him off. The Mounted Police want him there. I'll inform them at once."

HE was alone in the cabin. Alone, that is, except for Crim and Weatherby, tiptoeing around. Crim was hanging up his parka.

"Lookit," Weatherby whispered fiercely. "He stole my parka with the wolverine on it. I paid that squaw seventy bucks for it!"

"He figured it in," Crim returned, "at a hundred even. Seven hundred for the outfit, including the dogs. . . . He paid his way."

"On the line," Weatherby agreed, mollified. "The way I get it, though, aint the rest of it the lad's money? Didn't this guy Schafer steal it from Hod?"

"Shush," said Crim. "Wait till he wakes up."

An airplane motor was thundering in the night. Bill said, running his fingers through his hair: "I'm not asleep. I've just been thinking. . . . Where's that plane going?"

The two old-timers came over and leaned restfully against the fireplace.

"That there plane," said Crim, "is just taking off for Prince Rupert."

"But what about me? And Ruth?"

"I wouldn't know. Most folks would figure that was your business. . . . Oh, you mean how do you get down to Prince Rupert tomorrow? They're sending a plane after you."

"And what about Rocky?"

Crim pondered this. "What about Rocky? Well, the Sergeant's going to radio over to the Mounties, on the

The Return of William Makin

Most of our readers will remember those colorful stories about the Red Wolf of Arabia contributed in former years by William Makin. . . . Since the outbreak of the war, however, this well-liked writer has been too busy as a British officer in the Near East and Africa to do any fiction-writing. But with the winning of North Africa, he has been granted a breathing-spell; and from Cairo there comes to us a memorable drama of the North African front which will appear in our August issue, under the title

"Not in the Field Orders"

Mackenzie side, to watch out for Rocky at Sifton Pass. But the Sarge knows that Rocky won't make it to the Pass till tomorrow night. So he'll fly up there tomorrow and set down at the Pass, waiting for Rocky."

"Only Rocky won't be there?"

"The Sarge could take some eggs with him," Crim said. "He could keep them warm. Before Rocky shows up, they'd ought to be hatched."

"But won't they keep after him till they catch him?"

The two old-timers looked at each other, and Crim nodded. "Take it away, Mr. Weatherby."

"You can't catch a man who aint amongst us any more," Weatherby said. "The Sarge'll back-track afoot. He'll come to the dog-team, and a hole in the ice. There'll be a note saying Rocky had done give up. You can't drag a deep hole like that till spring. If you don't find nothin', what does that prove?" He blinked at Bill. "Rocky mentioned where he got that idea. It's slipped my mind for the minute, but it's good."

The plane roared up through the night, the echoes rolling and rumbling in the mountains. The sound of it circled overhead, dwindled, faded.

"Look," Bill said. "I'm not very bright. I've been kicked around a lot,

the last few days. Just answer one question, straight. . . . Do you believe—honestly—that Rocky killed Schafer?"

They looked at each other again, and both shrugged, palms outward.

"This is downright pitiful, Mr. Crim," said Weatherby. "The guy flatters himself, in claiming he isn't too bright. He's plain nuts! Rocky's admitted he killed Schafer, using a short length of pipe for the purpose. Them Seattle sleuths have even found the pipe, with red hair still clingin' to it. Rocky could have faded without saying a word to anyone. But no, he had a debt. There was interest on it, and he tossed in the interest, too. So how did he pay 'er, after first settlin' his haywire crown of glory into place firmly?"

"On the line."

"On the line, Mr. Crim. And now comes the plumb ruinous spectacle: This Bodine pilgrim's in the klink and will rot there. The gal's safe and sound, pounding her ear over at Campana's. This camp's had a circus that'll keep us palaverin' for weeks to come. Everybody's satisfied but this guy. He aint accused of nothin'. He's free as air. Still he sits there—"

"No, he aint, Mr. Weatherby. Look—he's getting up."

BILL was up, and did not grip the table for support. It was somebody else who was beaten and weary. Somewhere else there were tears and loneliness. Not here on the East Fork—not Bill Kennedy!

"He *has* waked up," Crim whispered. "Lookit—his face is shining."

"Why not?" said Weatherby. "Hod had red whiskers, too. . . . Use Campana's razor on 'em, boy; the strop's hanging back of the door, on the stoop."

Bill gripped their hands, and their expressionless masks fell. Crim's features split in an affectionate grin. Weatherby showed wolfish fangs. "Hold on, Mr. Crim—there's still a thousand bucks in that roll. John Law figures Rocky's got it. Fork it over to this young feller-me-lad."

"Keep it," said Bill. "You boys have earned it. Set 'em up for the camp. Drink to some of the old-timers who aren't here tonight."

He peered about him, looking for his helmet. "Hod Kennedy, for example. Who else?"

"Rocky Flynn," said Weatherby.

"It shall be done," said Crim.

Bill found his helmet on the table and put it on. He buttoned his jacket and drew on his gloves. He knew, none better, how cold was the wind that blew across the flats.

"I'll be over after you-all tomorrow," said Crim, following him to the door. "No use having the gal fighting the drifts again. I'll fetch a dog-team."

"Is there a dog-team in camp?" Bill asked.

"Sure. Half a dozen of 'em. . . . Around noon, maybe?"

Bill nodded. "If it's clear. If it's storming, the plane won't be here, anyway, so just let it blow. . . . Good night, boys."

It was clear enough out on the flats. The moonlight was bright on the snow and the stars flamed. Far above the dark timber and the thinning clouds was the glinting silhouette of the Rockies. Bill looked up at the peaks smilingly, almost with affection, as he leaned into the wind. One learned to understand mountains.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

BILL didn't sprint to Campana's, but he made it. As with Rocky Flynn, it was a long haul, though his own footprints in the snow made the going easier. He was backtracking now, striding up as from darkness toward flaming stars. He felt he had never seen a vista more beautiful than the crest of the Rockies above the thinning storm-clouds. . . .

Ruth was still asleep, her face to the wall. It came to him, as he tiptoed softly in and slid out of his coat and helmet, that the preceding two hours were a blank to her. The embers had lowered a little on the hearth. Flickering shadows had mellowed about her. That was all. She was unaware that he had even left the cabin.

He took off his cumbersome boots, so his stockinged feet would make less noise. With clumsy stealth he made up his bunk beyond the fireplace and placed a new log on the coals. Then he went softly to Ruth's bunk and knelt there, intending to remain but a moment. It would be heartless to waken her now. Merely to be near her was to share this humble yet exultant moment.

Her hair was a dark cloud against the whiteness of the Hudson Bays. In her complete exhaustion her breathing was irregular and troubled: she tossed a little, turning toward him. One shoulder was uncovered, and with infinite tenderness he drew up the blankets and tucked them in.

She roused up at once, momentarily terrified. Then, recognizing him, she snuggled down with a sigh.

"Mr. Kennedy, I believe. . . . You haven't turned in yet?"

"I'm just about to," he said. "D'you mind, my dear, if I kiss you good night first?"

Her eyes opened. "Sorry. I'd rather not. Under the circumstances, y'know—" Her arm came up and encircled his neck, warm and firm and confident. "You goose!" she whis-

pered. "You thought of it all by yourself, I suppose, after I've practically thrown myself at you? After I've waited since Shawnigan!"

The rest was muffled. She said, presently: "But what's the meaning of this, sir? Where are all those silly, noble scruples? What about—"

"That's next," Bill said. "Are you awake?"

Her cheek dimpled against his. "I hope so. I should be."

He told her what had happened over at the Meadows. She was not as incredulous as he had been, as certain that the facts, somehow, had tricked them. She had suspected all the while that there had to be something like this. There *had* to be, with Rocky mixed up in it. It had only been a question of how soon they could get to the bottom of it.

"Poor old misguided Rocky! He did some terrible things, and he'll suffer for them up in that lonely land. He made us suffer, too. We can be grateful to him now, at all events."

"His game was crooked up to the last play," Bill agreed. "Then he paid off. . . . And now, my dear, tired as you are—"

Nevertheless, for a few golden moments more, they went back in retrospect over the trail: up through the fault and across the snowfields, to the Seattle airport, back to those lazy, sunlit days at Shawnigan. . . . She told him the sequel there: She had waited for days for him to come back to the Strathcona dock. Then she had saved up her allowance and chartered a launch and gone over to that tiny cabin on the West Arm.

She had found the cabin deserted; Bill and his father were gone. She had sat there and cried. She had sworn then that she'd find him again and tell him that she was wrong.

"That was just an excuse, of course. What I really proved was that you can't outrun one of these primitive types, when her mind's made up. I demonstrated it up on the ledge, didn't I?"

"That was only the urge to survive," he asserted. "You were cold. Which reminds me—I'd better toss another hunk on the fire before I turn in." He chuckled, holding her close. "Good night, my dear. Sweet dreams, and all that. Remember, there are only foothills and valleys ahead of us now, because—"

"Because," she said, "we've crossed our mountain. They're really a friendly sort, though, once you understand their ways. Aren't they?"

"Mountains?" Bill said. "Hm-m-m!" "I like them. Otherwise I couldn't say to you—like this—good night, darling!"

"It's proved," Bill assented.

FREE

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OUTSIDE, a cold, incessant rain was falling. Inside, the vast hall was filled with men and women sitting around little tables drinking beer, smoking, knitting—listening to one of the best symphony orchestras in the Empire. Beethoven Hall—a part of the Philharmonie, down near the Potsdam Station—is one of the best-known and most popular rendezvous for people of all classes in Berlin, and the assemblage was a mixed one—including, however, one or more uniformed officers or soldiers in nearly every group.

Seated at one of the less prominent side tables were three officers of the General Staff and a bearded, distinguished-looking man in evening clothes. From the deference shown him by the Staff officers, people at neighboring tables assumed that he must be a personage of high rank—though some one whispered that he was merely the managing head of a big newspaper syndicate.

Presently two of the Staff officers excused themselves and went off to a midnight appointment. When they had gone, the remaining officer, Count von Schönstadt, turned to his companion, Doktor Liebknecht (that was the name by which Lord Trevor was known while in disguise within the German lines), and asked if his plans were completed for leaving the Empire—it was his impression that the Doktor had been entrusted with an Imperial mission of some confidential nature abroad.

"Why—practically so, General. I shall go down through Italy, if it is not too late, and take a steamer from Genoa to New York, I think. Our syndicate organization in New York will have no difficulty in getting me a passport under another name,—I'll naturally make some changes in my appearance,—and I'll proceed from there to London."

"Look out for the Admiral's submarines! You have a list of our people in England—in case of emergency?"

"I've full information concerning the two who are in supreme charge over there."

TWICE-TOLD TALES

THE END

LANCES *in* DIPLOMACY

"A Daring Escape," by Clarence Herbert New

"H-m-m—suppose you happen to need assistance in a place where you have no means of getting word to either of them? It seems to me, Doktor, that it would strengthen your position materially to have the names of others in the more important towns."

The Doktor hesitated a moment, and replied a little uncertainly: "The difficulty is—you know—there's always a risk in having such a list upon one's person. If arrested and searched, there is the danger of betraying our whole organization over there—and, if the enemy cannot make out the cipher, it is still presumptive evidence that one is not what he seems."

"Very true—but there are ways of minimizing that risk. As you know, I am in charge of our wireless plant at Nauen. It becomes necessary for me to devise codes every day which may be read without arousing suspicion. Let me illustrate, in your own case. You are managing director of the great *Reichspressbund*. It would be quite natural that you should have in your pocket a list of provincial newspapers throughout Great Britain, would it not? Precisely! Undoubtedly, you are already provided with such a list, including the names of editors and acting business managers. Very good. Suppose, now, we find upon such a list the Biddulph *Chronicle*—Robert Head, Publisher; Francis J. Head, Editor; Groves, G. R., Assistant Editor? The first two names are bona fide ones, which the English authorities can very easily verify. Groves, the Assistant Editor, would be our man in Biddulph, Staffordshire, and his initials, 'G. R.,' would signify that he is a grocer in that town. The initials 'G. G.' would signify green-grocer; the initials 'H. M.' would mean harness-maker; 'R. E.' would signify a land-agent or real-estate manager—and so on. In a couple of hours at my house—with the aid of Sell's Directory—I can make up such a list for you, and it may prove valuable sometime."

"Ach! . . . One dislikes to make you so much trouble, Herr Graf—but there is no question as to the value

of such memoranda! You've hit upon a code that will not be suspected—myself, I can supply many names without the Directory. And I shall be able to pay my dinner-call upon Madame, the Gräfin, at the same time, perhaps—eh?"

"To be sure! To be sure! She's at home, I think—and does not retire early. . . . By the way—would you be interested in watching a test of a new type of Zeppelin tomorrow evening? A protégé of mine has worked out a small but powerful apparatus, weighing only eight hundred pounds, for generating an exceedingly light gas in transit. It is more inflammable than what we're now using, but it will lift the largest dirigible to an altitude of five or six kilometers, if necessary—and the supply of chemicals taken on any one flight is sufficient to ascend from a low level at least twelve or fifteen times. Allowing for the weight of the bomb-armament, forward, and a five days' supply of petrol for the motor, it cuts down the crew to four or five men at the outside—but increases the working efficiency of any Zeppelin many times over."

LIEBKNECHT trusted his eyes betrayed no unnatural gleam of elation at this invitation.

"Where is the trial to be made?" he asked casually.

"The hangar is two miles from Nauen, and the flight will be across the marshes north of there. The man has been specializing at Stuttgart, and I built the hangar at Nauen so I could keep his experiments under my own eye. The workout tomorrow night is to be a strictly private affair. The Gräfin has engagements for the evening and does not care for that sort of thing, anyhow—but Fräulein von Helmuth, who is visiting us, as you know, seemed quite interested in my description of the gas, and is game enough to risk a cold wetting if the rain keeps up. There will be only us three, if you care to go. I intended asking some of the Staff—but I mean to drop a number of bombs into that thirty-kilometer marsh, from high altitudes, and I'd rather not have much of an audience until I'm quite sure the gas is reliable. Krantz is confident of its success—but sometimes

these inventors are oversure. Will you join us?"

"It would be most interesting. Really, I suppose it makes little difference whether I'm a few hours later in my departure—or even a day—as long as I catch my boat at Genoa. What time would you leave here for Nauen? About four in the afternoon?"

"The four-fifteen train will get us out there in very good time. We'll have dinner at a very fair inn, not far from my big wireless plant, and then spend the night either in one of the government motor-cars, or the cages of the Zeppelin. . . . Shall we start for my house now?"

WHILE this discussion was going on, a tall, thin man who looked as though he had not been many weeks out of a hospital, came in with a friend in uniform and selected a table which had just been vacated, near the Staff officers. He wore a heavy black beard, lightly sprinkled with gray,—cut square, in the German fashion,—and smoked glasses. After the waiter had served them, they glanced carelessly around at their neighbors—the tall man presently noticing Dr. Liebknecht, as he sat near them with his friends of the Staff.

"Psst! . . . Conrad! Glance around at this table on my right—and tell me whether you know either of those men."

"H-m-m—the handsome officer with the mustache is Ober-General Graf von Schönstadt. The man in evening clothes was pointed out to me, yesterday, as the Herr Doktor Liebknecht—*Ober Redakteur* of the great *Deutsches Reichspressbund*. I understand he was decorated by the Kaiser, the other day, for services to the Empire—something about catching a spy who was betraying the Wilhelmstrasse to the Allies, I believe."

"I thought that looked like Doktor Liebknecht—can't be two men of the same name, I suppose! Do you know Von Schönstadt well enough to introduce me?"

"*Gott im Himmel!* Are you crazy, my friend? I am but an *Oberst* of infantry—you, but a Major in a Spanish cavalry regiment—though you know a number of influential people here. We're scarcely in position to

from BLUE BOOK

intrude upon Ober-Generals of the Staff without special invitation!"

"Well—no matter! I can secure a card to the Herr Doktor through our Spanish Embassy. He saved my life, once—though he may have forgotten it; and I'd like to know him better."

ONE of the reasons at the back of Liebknecht's mind in suggesting a dinner-call upon the Gräfin at so late an hour—though Berlin stays up all night, of recent years—was the impression that Fräulein Hilda von Helmuth, the Gräfin's guest from Roumania, would have a confidential talk with him if it were possible to manage it. In Bucharest, some months before, she had drugged and searched him in her own house, under the impression that he was a German secret agent—but had subsequently learned certain facts which left her completely at sea regarding him. Then, at the Gräfin's dinner-dance in the Tiergartenstrasse, she had succeeded in obtaining several pages of Staff campaign memoranda from General Krellner's pocket, and had been narrowly saved from detection by a ruse of Doktor Liebknecht's which had resulted in the discovery of the papers upon the person of a Wilhelmstrasse spy, and his prompt execution by his own people.

There were callers in the drawing-room when "Liebknecht" entered the house with Von Schönstadt—and the General urged him to join the ladies for an hour while a list of the agents in England was being typewritten in his study, upstairs. After which, they could work together in transferring names to the newspaper list. With his German beard and thick-lensed spectacles, the Doktor was not as handsome a man as was the smooth-shaven Lord Trevor, of Dartmoor, but he naturally possessed the same charm of manner which made him instantly popular wherever he went.

The Gräfin and her callers were quite evidently pleased when he came into the drawing-room. The other gentlemen were in uniform,—few of the aristocracy were not, just then,—and the ladies accompanying them had just come from one of the theaters. Fräulein von Helmuth was modestly keeping herself rather in the background with a young captain of engineers—thereby winning much appreciation from her hostess and the other women; but, presently, she leaned forward and whispered something to the Gräfin.

"Why, of course! . . . That will be delightful! Come! . . . You gentlemen are all lovely dancers, and we've lots of room, here. The phonograph is loud enough, is it not? We had some beautiful records sent up this morning. What do you all say? Shall

we? Hilda, pick out that pretty waltz while I ring for Karl to remove the rugs!"

Liebknecht understood the move perfectly, as the Countess spoke, and claimed the first dance with her before the other men got their wits together. Afterward he was careful to dance with two of the other ladies before asking the Fräulein—so that none of them had a suspicion her suggestion had been made with but one object in view. She didn't lost a second, after they started.

"What happened to Van Stuysman after he went upstairs with those men, the other night? I've been shivering with a fear of something horrible ever since those papers were put in his pocket!"

"Exactly what would have happened to you, Fräulein, had they been found upon you! He was positive it was either I or some one of the household—had me accused by Graf von Brunn, at a conference we were having, upstairs. For a second, I thought he had me—didn't know but he really might have smuggled them into my clothes without my knowledge. But, thanks to the precautions I'd taken, they all apologized inside of three minutes; and that pinned it down to you, in his mind, because he'd no suspicion whatever of Kreviloff. It needed quick action—fortunately, you kept your wits about you and didn't lose your nerve."

"But—what did they do to him?"

"He was brought up before us all in that conference-room; the papers were taken from his pocket—identified by General Krellner. Then they took him over to the cavalry-barracks and stood him up before a firing-squad."

"Oh—my God! He was actually Von Kolb! One of their own secret agents, from the Wilhelmstrasse!"

"Exactly! . . . One of the meanest, most unscrupulous hounds that ever disgraced an old aristocratic family. They disowned him months ago; his actions and methods were altogether too raw. Last month he betrayed to their deaths De Luynes, of the Quai d'Orsay, and Borofski, of Moscow—did it deliberately, claiming to be an agent of Downing Street. You'll not forget to mention that in Paris, I hope—nor the fact of his Wilhelmstrasse connection. You had a narrow escape, *ma belle!* . . . He'd have had no more mercy upon you than a mouse in a trap!"

"Herr Doktor, I'm—I'm beginning to be—*afraid!* This horrible war—the things I've seen, and had to do! The consciousness that if I lose my nerve one second, at a critical time, I'm gone—and with me, perhaps, information which means annihilation to thousands of our brave soldiers—to women and children! For God's sake

—*who are you? What are you?* I find you here in Berlin holding secret conferences with the General Staff—ordered to the *Schloss* for confidential interviews with the Kaiser in that study of his overlooking the Inner Court. I hear you were decorated with the Iron Cross for discovering those papers on Von Kolb."

"And yet—in Bucharest, one of the King's aides whispered to me that a letter you brought Ferdinand at the risk of your life—the letter I could not find even between the soles of your shoes—actually switched him over to the side of the Allies! And you save me, here, from certain execution when you have proof positive that I had stolen most vital memoranda for the Allies! It seems impossible to make these facts harmonize unless—unless you are playing with death!"

"Listen, carefully! . . . We've but a moment more before the record stops! I've got to trust you! . . . My brain's in a whirl—but I'm conscious of that much at least! And we must have opportunity for half an hour's talk—under conditions which cannot arouse suspicion if anyone sees us together. Be at the corner of Friedrichstrasse and the Linden at exactly eleven o'clock tomorrow morning! I will come down the Linden in my landaulet—I've part use of an army car, though it is sometimes requisitioned when I want it—because I am a guest of the Von Schönstadts, and have a lot of shopping to do. My man, naturally, is one I can trust—though it would be impossible for him to overhear anything said in the tonneau while he's driving. You mustn't fail me, Doktor! What I have to say concerns you as well as myself."

"There! What a lovely one-step! You dance beautifully!"

Taking leave of the lady, Liebknecht presently left the drawing-room and ascended to the Count's study on the second floor—where they worked until two in the morning, preparing the newspaper list of German secret agents in the British Isles. It was by no means a complete one, as Von Schönstadt admitted, fully half of them coming under the management of an entirely different department in charge of another Staff officer, but the men listed were those who had been longest established in the various provincial towns and were least likely to arouse suspicion.

JUST before eleven o'clock, next morning, the Doktor sauntered down Unter den Linden from his hotel—pausing near the corner of Friedrichstrasse to glance through the arcade of the *Kaiser-Galerie*. As he turned about to resume his walk, one of the smoke-gray landaulets which had been seized by the Government

for army use stopped at the curb, and a daintily gloved hand beckoned to him from the window. Removing his hat, he stepped across the sidewalk to exchange the morning's compliments with the lady, and stood talking for a moment or so, bareheaded. Then the door swung open, and he got in beside her. The occurrence was so commonplace and casual that two Wilhelmstrasse men who noticed it from the opposite corner scarcely bothered themselves to see who the lady was.

In the landaulet, the Doktor was about to caution her against driving through the Tiergarten upon what might seem merely a morning airing, when she anticipated his suggestion.

"We shall keep driving through the business streets and the residence quarter where Government officials are thickest, my friend! Then it will be supposed we are either shopping or making official calls. If we seem to be followed, you will come into some of the shops with me while I make a few purchases. Now—let us lose no time! Do you recall a Spanish Major, Santoro-Lopez, — in one of the Madrid cavalry regiments,— who claims to know *you* very well?" (Liebknecht shook his head.) "He is about your height, but very thin—recently out of the hospital—wears a grayish-black beard, trimmed in the German fashion, and smoked glasses for weak eyes. Some of his acquaintances here are very prominent in Berlin society—I think the Spanish Ambassador is a friend of long standing, or some family connection. The Major says you once placed him under obligations, and he assured me that, whatever else you might be, you most emphatically were *not* an agent or admirer of Germany."

Liebknecht tried to make her description fit one of the many thousands he personally knew, and while it might have answered for three or four, none of these was Spanish. "How long did the Major say he had known me?" he asked. "Your description might fit several different men I remember meeting, at one time or another."

"He spoke as if he had known you—said that you once saved his life."

A vague sense of foreboding began to impress itself upon Liebknecht. He couldn't shape it in concrete form, but it seemed to carry suggestions of dead men—of enemies who impersonated ghosts, that he might be induced to betray himself. "Can't seem to place the chap at all, you know! Dare say I'd recognize something familiar about him if we came together. Well, it's quite immaterial, y'know. What about the man?"

For a second, the Fräulein looked at him in a puzzled way. "How

oddly you said that! With my eyes shut, I could have sworn you were English, Herr Doktor! That would explain many things; perhaps you *are* English—taking chances no sane man would dream of taking, here in Berlin! . . . However, we're losing time! Have you heard anything about the trial of a new lifting-gas which is to be made at Nauen, this evening, in one of the Zeppelins?"

"Ja! . . . I am invited to accompany General Graf von Schönstadt and your most interesting self, on the four-fifteen train this afternoon."

"Great heavens! . . . He has as much confidence in you as *that*! Why—why, that puts a totally different appearance upon the proposition; you will be in a more favorable position to take advantage of an odd chance than I even dreamed of! You see, the Major has also a chance to do something, by the merest good luck, though he undoubtedly played for it two or three weeks ago, when he was introduced by a Stuttgart professor to the man who has invented the gas. It appears that one of the vital ingredients occurs most frequently with a certain metallic ore which has been found in its purest state upon the southern slopes of the Pyrenees. Hemmed in, as Germany now is, it seemed almost impossible to get any of it; but the Major at once proposed to use his influence with the Spanish Ambassador to obtain some, and the shipment arrived last week. It is so much purer than anything the inventor had been able to obtain that he succeeded in producing everything he hoped for in the gas within forty-eight hours.

"Naturally, the inventor feels under obligations to Major Lopez—and has obtained the Graf's permission that he may be present at the trial, this evening. Should any chance present itself—

LIEBKNECHT remained thoughtfully silent for a moment. "How," he asked then, "are you sure you can trust this Major Santoro-Lopez? How can you be certain he is not an agent of the Wilhelmstrasse, laying a trap for both of us—possibly, some friend of Von Kolb's who knows he was tricked to his death in the matter of those papers, and has sworn a vendetta against us?"

"He is vouched for, absolutely, by Kreviloff—who says he is a Downing Street man!"

"Oh, the devil! In that case, he'll not deceive me very long—I know a lot of those people, very well! H-m-m—tell me what you have in mind concerning that Zeppelin, Hilda."

"Why—frankly, my friend," she replied, "this place is getting too hot for me. I want to go away from here

—in any way, by any means that will get me back to Paris with my life and liberty! I came here from Bucharest thinking that, as an inmate of the Von Schönstadt mansion, I would have exceptional opportunities to procure valuable information for our generals. But that affair of Krellner's papers, the other night, showed me what a hornets' nest this city is—even Kreviloff wouldn't attempt it. He said ninety per cent of the danger would come after the papers were stolen—and he was right! However, if I do get through alive, it will be with some information which our people will be very glad to get, and the sooner they have it, the better. I think Major Lopez is in much the same position, and imagined that even you, my friend, might be wondering how to safely get outside of the German lines with what you must know, from the opportunities you've had. Only a fool stays *too* long, Doktor!"

"Ja! . . . That is true! What do you know about managing a dirigible, Hilda?"

"Not the littlest thing, *mon ami*! I can start and run a petrol-motor in an automobile, but I couldn't take it apart for repairs. And, though the Major claims to be a good mechanic with any sort of engine, he knows nothing about dirigibles. He had an idea, however, that you were more experienced in aviation."

AGAIN a vague premonition stole through the Doktor's brain. "Look you, *ma belle*!" he said. "I know this: it takes twenty or thirty men to get a big Zeppelin out of its hangar and start it aloft. We must figure upon at least that much of a crowd, standing all around the thing. What we do must take into consideration their presence and activities. Then again, Zeppelins and other dirigibles vary in the way and extent to which they are first inflated. The inflating is usually done—partly, at least—inside the hangar. We can't figure upon any opportunity whatever until we're on the ground and have a chance to watch the preliminaries. What had you in mind when you first mentioned this?"

"Oh, I thought we might, somehow, all get up in the air with that inventor and the Graf. Even if they carry a couple of men to help them, we'd be almost evenly matched and could probably shoot two of the four before they realized what we meant to do. We mustn't injure the Count if we can possibly avoid it: I've been his guest, and am fond of the Gräfin. Aside from his military insanity, he's one of the nicest, most considerate men I ever met!"

"You would, then, make him a prisoner and take him with us? Your

plan has this merit. Hilda: it is practical and might succeed. But you can't permit the knowledge of what we really are to remain in the hands of any living men, prisoners or not. Eventually, they are set free or exchanged—and our secret is known. We are even likely to be tracked down and shot after peace has been declared—not to mention the fact that we would be useless to our own governments, forever afterward. I should regret, as much as you, harming either the Count or his protégé, the inventor—and I think it more than likely a way may open up by which we can get aloft in that dirigible without killing anyone.

"One point that might help us to do it just occurs to me. We dine at that little Nauen inn—probably we shall finish our meal and start for the hangar by seven-thirty. It takes thirty or forty minutes to ease one of those big Zeppelins out from under its shed—call it eight-thirty before she's ready to go up. And half an hour for explaining the thing, and other little delays. Very good! If, when we are ready to start, the Graf receives a message calling him back to the wireless plant, that removes our chief obstacle, temporarily—leaves us with the inventor and his helpers."

"He'll never start up without the Graf!"

"Certainly not! But—a number of things may happen. The point is, our actions will be less hampered, our wits given a better chance to plan, with the Count away for an hour or so. And Kreviloff will undoubtedly send a telephone message for us—something requiring Von Schönstadt's presence, imperatively, at the big wireless plant in his charge—to reach him about ten minutes before nine, tonight. That should be just the time. Kreviloff knows you have important information, and will do anything to help you get away with it! The point which really decided me upon seeing what there might be in this Zeppelin proposition was the fact that she will go up equipped with her full complement of new-explosive bombs."

"You don't mean that— You are thinking of using them before we get clear of Germany! You won't be satisfied to get safely away—if it so happens we have an opportunity!"

"Tut-tut-tut! You and I are not risking our lives here for nothing, *ma belle*! We are here to serve our respective countries—as is your friend Major Lopez. Let us get away with the information we have, if we can—of course. But let us also do more if the opportunity presents itself. You will give me some touch or glance this evening by which I may recognize Major Lopez without bungling. If I

appear not to recognize him, there will be a reason for it. Now you had better set me down at the corner—I've a lot to do before that train leaves, and so have you."

EARLY in the afternoon the sun came out for half an hour, but by four o'clock the rain set in again with every prospect of lasting through the night. It was not the sort of weather in which the average woman cares to be abroad—but as Von Schönstadt had said, with evident approval, the Fräulein had plenty of sporting blood in her and was always ready for anything novel or exciting. She appeared with him at the station in a thick woolen skirt, over bloomers of the same material—a heavy frieze jacket, so finely woven that it would turn any ordinary rain, gauntlets, high boots of oiled leather, and a velour Fedora hat. There were also a couple of automatic pistols with full magazines, where she could get at them in a hurry—but so well concealed that there was no external evidence of their existence. Liebknecht was in puttees and riding-breeches, with a soft leather jacket under his big overcoat.

At the inn, when they reached Nauen, they found a bearded stranger whom the Fräulein introduced as the Major Santoro-Lopez who had secured the Spanish ore for the young inventor—and the Graf courteously offered him a seat in the motor-car when they started, after dinner.

Nauen lies upon the brink of an elevated plateau, overlooking much lower marsh land to the northward. Five miles west, along the brow of the hill, is the small railway-station of Berge; about halfway between, in an open deserted tract of land, the Zeppelin hangar had been constructed by Von Schönstadt's workmen. In the cold, drizzling rain, it was a desolate, uninviting spot—so entirely out of the beaten track that a solitary lantern at one end of the hangar was the only thing which kept them from passing it in the darkness. When the car was driven under a shed at one side, however, it became apparent that a few smaller buildings were clustered under lee of the big long one, and that there was more or less illumination from incandescents inside the hangar—the current being supplied from a dynamo in a separate powerhouse.

AS they stepped through a narrow doorway from the outer shed, the incandescents revealed the lower bulging surface of a vast indistinct bulk overhead and stretched, a good four hundred feet of length, back to the other end of the hangar, and from which depended a maze of stays and ropes supporting three wicker cages

connected by skeleton bridges and covered outside with a waterproof substance.

As Liebknecht and the Fräulein glanced aloft, the shadows appeared to be shifting against the steel frames of the hangar: and they suddenly realized that the vast object over them was actually supporting itself and its dependent cages, clear of the ground. Along the floor, however, at each side of the hangar, two inverted rails stretched away in the distance until they emerged at the front end and ran along the ground outside for a thousand feet. Running under these rails were fourteen-inch trolley-wheels connected by light steel cables to the framework of the dirigible and provided with a tripping arrangement by which all of the cables might be simultaneously released—the object being to hold the monster airship on a fixed level, close to the ground, while it was being run out of its hangar, most of the inflating being done inside.

Presently the little group watching the lines of workmen getting ready to ease the monster out from under its shelter and complete the inflation, was joined by a stockily-built young fellow in greasy overalls, who greeted the Major as an old acquaintance and whom the Count introduced as Herr Krantz, the inventor of the gas. Liebknecht appeared very much interested.

"Will you permit, General, that Herr Krantz takes us into his laboratory, yonder, and gives a little demonstration of how his gas acts in practice? He has a dummy which shows it clearly."

"Most certainly, Herr Doktor—to be sure! I wish to see for myself—before we trust our necks aloft with the stuff! This way, please—look out that your feet are not caught in any of this rigging along the ground. Those hosepipes come from the generators."

In a few minutes they were gathered around Krantz in his laboratory before a compact arrangement of cylinders, pipes and valves—upon which rested, in wooden chocks, a thin steel cylinder, connected by armored rubber hose.

"This, gentlemen, is an exact duplicate of the generating apparatus in the middle cage under the Zeppelin—excepting the steel cylinder on top, which represents the collective gas-reservoirs of the dirigible. That cylinder is charged with the regulation gas used in all the Zeppelins—the same which is now flowing through the feed-pipes into the gas-envelopes of the big airship in the hangar next door. In this machine under it are the chemicals which generate my own invention—the application process is quite simple. Each of these little stop-

cock valves opens a pipe-connection to one of the reservoirs overhead—and the moving of these two segmented levers starts or stops the generating process. If you were aloft and wished to go higher, you would merely pull these two levers half, three-quarters, or all-the-way over, and then open each of the pipe-valves for about one minute. My gas acts as an expander and lightener of the regular gas already stored in the reservoirs."

"*Himmell!* . . . It is a marvelous invention, Herr Krantz! And to come down again, I suppose there are cords you pull to let the mixed gases escape out of the reservoirs?"

"Precisely! Though we use steel wires, attached to levers, instead. The row of levers, properly labeled, are alongside of my machine in the middle cage. There is one point which I've not yet succeeded in overcoming. Each time my gas is mixed with the other, the proportion is naturally increased—and the regular gas decreased by subsequent escape while descending. About the fifteenth mixture, the reservoirs contain almost entirely my gas—and it is more likely to explode from a spark or tongue of fire than the other. Otherwise, it is safe enough—but I think the passing of a bullet or shrapnel through one of the reservoirs might set it off if it were ninety per cent pure. Now, to give you some idea of how quickly it acts in the reservoirs, I wish two of you gentlemen would lift this steel cylinder from the chocks, on top—it is charged with the regular gas."

Liebknacht and the Count—both powerful men—stooped under the ends of the cylinder and lifted with all their strength, but they raised it barely three inches.

"You see!" pursued the inventor. "Now observe! I pull the two levers—but half open! I open the valves in but four of the pipes—and close them in about five seconds, shutting off the levers also."

The heavy cylinder vibrated, perceptibly—then slowly rose two or three feet in the air. Everyone could see that it would have gone higher, tearing away its hose-connections, had not the generating process been stopped when it was. Krantz opened a little valve in one end of the cylinder; there was a perceptible hissing—and it settled down into its chocks once more.

LIEBKNECHT and the Major understood the method of operation perfectly—and exchanged a single meaning glance as the little party walked back to the hangar, where the great dirigible was now moving slowly out into the rain and darkness, held in position by the anchored trolley-tracks and cables. When it was en-

tirely clear of the hangar, Krantz shouted a question to the lines of men standing by the trolley-clutches and then turned to the Graf.

"Might as well climb into the middle cage, General—so that you can all watch me take her up. We're practically ready; there's nothing to wait for that I know of! I'll need but one other man—for the bombs: and our heavy clothes are in the forward cage. Let me assist you, Fräulein—we have to use a ladder because there has been no time to build a regular landing-platform."

At that moment, the popping of a motorcycle was heard coming through the darkness. A young subaltern jumped off his wheel near the group of lanterns, asking for the Graf. The message which he fished from an inner pocket requested the General's presence in the wireless plant at Nauen for half an hour—as an important communication was expected from England at nine-fifteen, corrected time. There was no getting out of it, and so he raced away in the army car, telling his guests he would return very shortly. As the Zeppelin-cages were provided with doors and windows which could be closed against the weather, he suggested that they would probably find it as comfortable to remain where they were, and they accepted the suggestion.

KRANTZ and his fellow operative, however, remembered after a moment's discussion that their heavier clothing had really been left in the lockers of the laboratory instead of in the forward cage, and both climbed down to go back there and see if they had overlooked anything else, while they waited for the Graf's return. It was one of those chances which keen-witted men so frequently seize to advantage. As their lanterns moved away from underneath the cage, Liebknacht softly closed the trap-door and asked, in a tone of command:

"Did you notice the tripping-device on those trolley-cables, Major? I thought I saw you examining one."

"Yes—the tongue locks with a little hasp, which must be cast loose before the hook can be tripped."

"But with the hasp swung around open, the tongue is merely held in place by the pull on the cable—eh? If the cable slackens, they're liable to let go of themselves, without being tripped?"

"That's the sort! I believe they'd let go nine times out of ten, if the pull eased up a little. Of course, the hasp isn't opened until everything's ready to trip—it's the old anchor-davit proposition, as near as I could see."

"Just what I thought! And those men standing by the trolley-cables, down there, thought we were all ready

to start, when that message came for the Graf. I saw the four nearest us opening those hasps! They haven't got it through their heads, yet, how long they may have to wait. Now, if by any fluke, some one in the Wilhelmstrasse has realized that we three are making a flight with the Graf together,—and sees anything suspicious in it,—the psychological time for something to happen is within the next fifteen or twenty minutes! This is our opportunity to start something!"

"By gad! You're dead right, Doktor! But how the dev—! What do you figure on doing?"

"Watch me! And both of you hang on tight to something! There'll be a good bit of a jolt in a second or two!"

STEPPING over to the row of levers connected with the steel wires from the escape-valves in the great gas-envelopes overhead, he pulled down one after another for about ten seconds—then shoved them back, the valves closing again, automatically, from the pressure inside. Looking down from a window he had opened, he saw the cables slacken in the hands of the waiting men, droop lower, lower, until, with frightened glances at the huge mass over their heads, panic seized them and they bolted out from under, thinking there were leaks in the gas-envelopes and that the dirigible was collapsing upon them. Just before the floors of the cages touched the ground, Liebknacht quickly pulled the levers of the generating machine wide open and, rapidly opened every valve leading to the reservoirs above. For a space of five seconds there was a cessation of motion in the great mass—then, with a surge of rapidly increased lifting force, the dirigible went straight up—the forward end tilted a little higher than the rear. There were shouts of terror and amazement from below—two snapping reports, as a couple of the cables which had failed to trip snapped under the strain. Quickly closing the valves again and shutting off the levers, Liebknacht said:

"Put your head out of that window, Hilda, and scream for help! Keep it up! Major, open that trap in the floor and shout that the levers are jammed—escape-valves won't work! From his own window, the Doktor shouted: "Krantz! Krantz!" Then he opened for a few seconds the escape-valves in the forward gas-envelopes, until the dirigible was on an even keel.

For a minute they saw tiny sparks of light below them moving confusedly in various directions—lanterns in the hands of Von Schönstadt's men; then the rain-cloud enveloped them, and everything was blank. After

ten minutes the Doktor located the switches of the storage-battery light-circuit, and turned on the illumination in the other cages.

"Now then! The sooner we get back to that after-cage and start up the propelling machinery, the better for us! The wind is blowing sixty or seventy miles an hour, up here—from a little south of east. Unless we get control of this thing pretty soon, we'll be blown out over the North Sea! Hilda, you follow me, with the Major close behind! We've got to work along that flying-bridge to the after-cage for about a hundred and fifty feet—with nothing but a hand-rope between us and a half-mile drop! Fortunately, you can't see anything but mist all around us, so you won't get dizzy! Come!"

In that wind, it was a ticklish proposition, but they managed it safely. In the after-cage, they found a big petrol-motor with a week's supply of fuel in tanks. There was also a steering wheel for the great rudder-plane, and a ship's binnacle, with a Lord Kelvin compass. In racks on the side wall there were telescopes, prism-binoculars, signal-flags—and a small but high-powered wireless outfit run by a small dynamo which could be belted on to the motor-shaft if the storage-battery happened to be out of commission.

Starting up the motor, Liebknecht swung the wheel over until the nose of the dirigible was pointed due west—then opened up his petrol-feed until the propeller was exerting every ounce of its thrust.

"Where are you figuring upon taking us, Herr Doktor?"

"That's what I've been considering for the last hour! If I could be sure of hitting the Krupp works at Essen and doing any real damage, I'd not waste time on any other place. But they've a lot of armored-netting protection against aerial attack, now. We could do some harm—but not enough, from any safe altitude. At Cuxhaven and Emden, there are a number of submarines under construction in gantries which we can smash if we locate them. I've made the flight in a biplane from near Berlin to Belgium—know the appearance of both land and cities if I once get a glimpse of them; but in this mist we might easily drop low enough to hit the tower of some building, or even an abrupt rise in ground. Probably our safest course will be to run at this altitude for, say, three hours. With this wind and our engine-power, that should fetch us in the neighborhood of Hamburg—then we'll try to get more definite bearings. In the meanwhile, I fancy you and the Fräulein had best go along to the middle cage and try to get a bit of sleep on those cushioned transoms along the side walls."

"Just as you say, old chap; you're in command."

There was a familiarity in the tones of the Major's voice which set Liebknecht's nerves jumping with a return of the foreboding he had experienced twice before. It was as if the voice of one dead had suddenly addressed him in the most matter-of-fact way.

"For the love of heaven, man—who are you? Your face isn't familiar—though I haven't seen it by daylight; but I know you! There's no question as to that!"

"Of course there isn't, George! You'll recognize me last enough, when you've opportunity for a good look. Perhaps you'll know before then. Come, Fräulein—we must get our bit of sleep!"

THE incidents of that flight across northern Europe would make a story by themselves. In the rain and murk, Trevor eased the big dirigible lower until, about two o'clock in the morning, he could make out occasional lights below—and presently recognized a small town near Hamburg. Flying as low as he dared, he passed over that city—down the river—and finally located the submarine gantries at Cuxhaven. Then, heading up into the wind, he succeeded in maintaining an almost motionless position directly over them while the Major, in the forward cage, found his mark with the first bomb and then dropped twenty at once—exploding a number of petrol-tanks and completely wrecking everything within five hundred yards.

An hour later, the same exploit was repeated at Emden—in both instances, the bulk of the dirigible being so nearly indistinguishable in the rain and mist that they were not seen from below at all. At sunrise they were over the North Sea; and the weather having cleared, Liebknecht spent the day quartering back and forth down to Dover Strait in a search for cruising German submarines. At five in the afternoon they came upon two of these craft exchanging cruising signals—and being recognized as a German Zeppelin by various unmistakable features in the dirigible's construction, were able to get directly overhead before they were suspected. The second submarine was practically submerged when the bomb struck it—but went down like the other in a flurry of oil.

The supply of bombs now being exhausted, they were confronted with the problem of effecting a landing in England without being shot or taken prisoner—which, for many reasons, they wished to avoid. Liebknecht decided upon coming down in a little uninhabited valley near Mt. Snowdon, in Wales, as there would be no aerial-defense guns there

to fire upon them, and a chance to get away from the dirigible before any of the Welsh villagers could reach them. After careful maneuvering, the Doktor managed to ease the dirigible down very gently, with its nose pointing due west, and the after-cage, with rudder and propeller, overhanging a little cliff. The steel cables were still hanging free, and they secured a few of these to the branches of trees to hold the big mass steady until they were ready to let it go. When the others were safely on the ground, Liebknecht started the motor with its throttle wide open, then ran along the flying-bridge and started the generating-plant, opening every valve. He had just time to make a rather long jump before the great lifting heave came—tearing the cables loose from the trees and shooting the big dirigible upward on a long slant into the western sky.

Three days later, a steamer half-way across the Atlantic saw a Zeppelin explode in midair, and reported the occurrence by wireless. To this day, Von Schönstadt and the Army Staff in Berlin regretfully discuss the sad but spectacular deaths of the popular and valuable Doktor Liebknecht, and the beautiful and charming Fräulein von Helmuth. Which was precisely Lord Trevor's intention.

AFTER watching the craft disappear, the two men hung little pocket mirrors upon the trunk of a big tree in the forest and proceeded to alter their appearance very materially—Liebknecht shaving off everything but his mustache, and the Major leaving nothing at all on his face. Then they turned to look at each other—and Trevor staggered back, his brain reeling.

"Lammerford! Alive! My God! Impossible! It was a dead man I left at that monastery in Roumania!"

"Practically so, old chap! I didn't regain consciousness for a week. But those monks are good surgeons and capital nurses. They make a cordial which has been handed down to them for centuries, and I believe it was that which really started my recovery.—Fräulein, permit me to introduce Mr. Arthur Trevelyan" (Lammerford had noted that Trevor had no idea of disclosing his real identity to her), "an American gentleman who has done more for England than she can ever repay! Mr. Arthur George Trevelyan—don't forget the man or the name! I say, old chap—it's not really possible that you managed to get away with that list of German spies on you!"

"I have it, though, Lammy! And we've done good work for England in the last thirty hours, beside that! Well—we've a stiffish bit of footing it through these forests. Come along!"

The MURDER *at* RECLUSE HOUSE

A short complete novel

by *Philip Wylie*

Co-author of "When Worlds Collide," author of
"Finnley Wren," "Salt Water Daffy" and others.



NEW YORK can be melancholy. Henry Redge walked a little faster and hugged himself snugly into his shiny topcoat to fight off the effects of that sudden realization. This, he thought, was no time to be either gloomy or disturbed. He turned into Fifth Avenue, hoping for relief of the new incubus. The wide and usually exhilarating street was somber also. The low sun was still shining, but it threw giant shadows; there were people walking with holiday languor in both directions, but they seemed preoccupied and unsmiling; it was warm where the sunlight illuminated brick and stone, but beyond and behind were chilly pockets.

His eyes searched doorways to keep track of descending street numbers. Once he stopped for a moment to stare at a futuristic window-display—a woman's hand as big as a person which held a vast artificial plume and a dozen square perfume bottles, opaque and ruby red. Presently he turned right; the shadows of the side street swept him in. His coat flapped about his legs. A taxi-horn startled him. At Number 12, west, he stopped.

Number 12 was sandwiched between two tall dingy business buildings. One of its walls was apparently contiguous with one of the buildings. The other was separated by an alley, closed with a weathered wooden door. Across the street was a brownstone row, flat-faced, unbroken, inhospitable. Elaborate ironwork and carved stone, rusted and eroded by time, left no impression of dead elegance, only of tedious age. He looked at Number 12 again; it was a red sandstone building, double the width of most such houses and four stories high, with an iron balustrade, chipped steps, and corroded hardware on its heavy paired doors. All the blinds on all the windows were drawn. Henry walked drearily up the steps and yanked on the bell-pull.

The man who answered was tall, thinner even than Henry, bald save for a white fringe of mousey hair and dressed in clothes that had been made for him in a different era, when his weight had been considerably greater. His eyes were impersonal and cold, like a bird's, as he gazed at Henry. He said, "Oh, yes. You're the young man from the agency."

"Henry Redge. I was told to come at four. I have no card."

The butler said, "I see. Come in."

There were two sets of doors. The vestibule between had a dirty marble floor, on which lay a worn mat. The hall beyond was so heavily curtained that a light burned in it, but the light was dim: Henry stood stiffly, trying to accustom himself to it. The butler did not take his hat or show him to a room; he simply went away. A huge gas chandelier hung in the hall. On its floor was an Oriental rug, tortuous with muddy patterns. A rug also hung over a banister that followed a wide staircase. This rug was fringed; a draft, blowing down the staircase, kept the fringe in continuous, serpentine motion.

A rumble behind Henry startled him. A sliding door opened.

"This way," the butler said.

Henry walked through a spacious, high-ceilinged drawing-room. Its furnishings were ponderous and expensive but he could not see them in detail because this room too was dark. A short hall on the far side of the room led to a door. The butler turned its knob and announced:

"Mr. Redge, Mr. Southey."

Henry pulled himself together. He was pale and his cheeks were hollow. But he knew that he had a good face, a fighting chin, level alert eyes, black eyebrows and hair, a high forehead. Nothing to be ashamed of; he could make a better-than-average "appearance." He told himself that. Mr. Southey was not going to get him down—no matter what Mr. Southey was like. A snore came from the room.

The snore stopped and a soft, deep voice said, "Thank you, Willis."

Then Henry could see Mr. Southey. He was fat and broad-shouldered. He had a white mustache, white hair and gray skin, folded three times under his jaw. He wore a broadcloth suit as old as the butler's. He had a big nose and slate-colored eyes abnormally far apart. He had braced his elbows on the arms of a large leather rocking-chair of a sort Henry had not seen since his childhood. He put his fingertips together and yawned.

"Redge, isn't it?"

"Henry Redge." That had been said enough, Henry thought. He was unable to decide whether or not he liked the look of Carrington Southey. Certainly the room—an informal and amateurish sort of office—needed the attention of a secretary: in it and around it were piled on desks, tables, and the floor, a disarray of books, papers,



"Somebody's killed him!" Henry said. Paul shook his head and laughed.

letters, newspapers and magazines. The air was stagnant with the smell of old books—acid and palpable here, in contrast to the vague moldiness of the rest of the house.

Mr. Southey said, "Sit down. Take the dictionary off that stool. Put your hat and coat anywhere."

HENRY did so. Mr. Southey watched him. Then crossing one fat leg over the other, he began to ask questions in his slow, gentle bass voice.

"New Yorker?"

"No. That is, I came here a few months ago. I worked for—"

"Yes—Smith and Jones. The agency sent me your dossier. How come you're not in the Army?"

"I'm 4-F. I'd had some reverses in my own business—several, over a period of years. I failed, finally. Apparently I worried more than I'd known—draft examinations showed ulcers—"

Mr. Southey's voice was unchanged. "Then—aren't you wasting my time?"

"I'm well again," Henry answered doggedly, quietly. "Not well enough for service—I tried—but well enough for sedentary work."

"Dependents?"

"None."

"Married? Engaged? Divorced?"

Henry smiled ruefully. "After eight years of trying to run Dad's shop, and failing,—eight years day and night,—you look back, Mr. Southey, on a life that's a blank as far as girls are concerned."

The soft-spoken man picked up a letter. "You know stenography and accounting. College education. That's what I requested of the agency—and they've sent it, in the person of yourself. They told you about the job?"

"They said very little. Private secretary to a retired business man—"

Mr. Southey frowned; it brought together new folds of the gray skin on his broad brow. "A confining job, Redge. Sedentary. Egad! Everything in this house is sedentary—even the passing of time! I live here with my brother: he's crippled." Mr. Southey pulled his lip and scowled more deeply. "Also with Willis, who came here in 1901—and looks it. Two female servants—scraggly ghosts who cook and clean—cook abominably, and clean just enough to keep us from smothering in dust. I am seventy-one years old, Mr. Redge."

He stopped. Henry said nothing.

"Seventy-one. In this room, for several decades, my personal papers have accumulated. I recently decided to get them in order. The chore will require the making of notes, a certain amount of accounting, and the writing of many letters. Some of the latter"—he chuckled briefly—"are a good many years overdue. I have four sisters—all living, all pestiferous, all vain, all occasional callers. Very few people outside the family are aware. I dare say, that Paul—that's my brother—and I still exist. It's easy to vanish in Manhattan, Mr. Redge. Very easy. You merely pull down your window-blinds—and stay home."

That phrase fitted with the battered façade of Number 12, with the fact that the blinds were pulled, and with Henry's mood of melancholy. He did not want this job. He did not want any job, as a matter of fact, except one, which involved a lot of outdoor dust, squads right, and training with a rifle. That work, however, was closed to him—at least until his health improved. Meanwhile, he had to eat. In his pocket was forty-two dollars and eighty cents. He owed a week's rent—eight dollars. Nevertheless, the prospect of the passage of months in this house with this huge queasy mummy of a man was disconcerting.

"You were born—" began Mr. Southey.

"In Michigan." Henry was relieved at the broken silence. "My father had a machine-shop. My mother died when I was young. I was their only child. I went to the

University of Michigan. I took over the shop in 1936—and ran it into the ground. I'm not a business man. What I *am*, I don't know yet—though I should, at thirty-one! I learned stenography in high school, and used it in business as a short-cut. Accounting, I picked up. I'm not a certified man." He thought there was a look of satisfaction in Mr. Southey's eyes; he could not be sure.

"Since this job is temporary," the big man replied gently, "I would expect whoever takes it to be here pretty much all the time. I will pay fifty dollars a week. The proposition is simply to put my affairs in order—books, magazines, papers, letters, accounts, clippings, what-not. I guarantee six months' wages. It may take more time; if you are finished in less, you'll get your money anyhow. Twelve hundred and fifty dollars, minimum. Your quarters would be on the fourth floor—if you are interested in seeing them. I dislike noise, interruption of my own schedule, visitors, frivolity, late hours, and everything else that appertains to active—and especially to youthful—living. You can get an idea of the nature of the task by just glancing about you."

Henry didn't want a permanent job. He had to take it easy, to regain his strength. He sat uneasily, aware of temptation and of a somewhat incomprehensible resistance to it.

"I'd want to get outdoors for walks—"

Mr. Southey seemed to realize that the younger man was hesitant. "Walks? Certainly. I'll expect you to put in the usual eight hours a day here, no more. Certainly no less. For the rest, you can eat here—or with Willis—or outside. Walk all you like. Moreover, I'll make this additional bargain with you: I'm an old man; my heart's bad. If your employment should be unexpectedly terminated by my sudden death, you'll get your six months' wages. That's not a very good gamble, Mr. Redge—I seem to be living along well enough, but I myself at your age, was a gambler above all else." He laughed, chuckling easily. "Do you have so much to lose that you must consider at any length? Comfort, quiet,—which you seem to like,—privacy, easy work; and when I say Irene's food is *bad*, I mean that only in comparison to the food at Mouquin's—or Jack's—or Villepigue's—in, say, 1895. A year, Redge—a year that—"

Henry's voice spoke of its own accord. "I'll take the job."

Mr. Southey reached back without looking. He separated a bell-pull from the drapes. Willis opened the door within seconds.

"Mr. Redge will move his things over. —This evening, Mr. Redge? . . . Settle him, Willis."

"Quite so, sir."

I was happening. Henry thought, as if it had been predetermined—as if the butler and his employer had known, right along, that he would take the job. He retraced his steps behind Willis. It was darker in the drawing-room, very dark in the hall. From somewhere—perhaps in the building next door—came a humming. It jumped Henry's mind inexplicably back to the little machine-shop he had inherited and failed to run successfully. Willis opened the door into the vestibule. Henry banished the memory of the machine-shop and opened the outside door himself. He turned.

"I'll come back with my luggage after supper. About eight? It isn't much—two suitcases and a couple of cartons."

"Eight o'clock, sir."

That was all. Henry shut the outside door and shivered. The street was gray with shadows. On the windows of a near-by brand-new skyscraper the sun shone brassily. The air felt fresh in comparison to the atmosphere in Number 12. It seemed like Sunday afternoon. He walked back toward Fifth Avenue. Labor Day—Monday—thai

was it. He passed the store window that contained the woman's hand, and realized it was in the building with the sun-splashed windows, but when he looked up, its shaft was no longer glowing. The sun had gone.

"I don't like Southey," he thought; "the old Buddha is spooky. He must have had a lot of dough, once—must still have, to pay me fifty a week and guarantee it! Funny—he didn't even put in a proviso about my work being satisfactory. I suppose he assumed I'd know that was a condition."

Henry walked at an increasing pace. Lights were coming on, not many—because of the dim-out—but they were changing the mood of Fifth Avenue. Voices sounded cheerily. There was an acceleration of footsteps—as if people were rested, now, and eager to begin the work of a new week. . . . Fifty dollars guaranteed. It was better than a margin of thirty-two dollars, and no guarantee of anything. . . . He looked at his wrist-watch. Time enough to pack—that would take only minutes—and pay his landlady for his greasy-walled room—and to eat dinner. A good dinner, Henry thought: a steak; a cocktail, even. The doctor had permitted that "occasionally."

While he dined, the mood came back. There was something about Number 12. . . . Much of the West Fifties had changed with the years; one street was like a carnival—a rosy glow of swing-drugged *bistros*; there were skyscrapers on others—and Rockefeller Center; but Number 12 had not changed. Behind its two sets of double doors lived a generation that had vanished everywhere else with the demise of its patroness, Queen Victoria.

CHAPTER TWO

T eight o'clock he arrived in a taxi. He carried his bags up the steps. Willis helped with the cartons. Henry paid the driver and went in. The doors slammed. On the balustrade, the rug-fringe still rippled. They went up the broad curving stairs and followed a long hall past several big mahogany doors to a narrower staircase. At the top of that, and another like it, midway down a hall, was an ordinary oak door. The room behind it, Henry thought, would be on the side of the house. Willis fumbled for a light-switch; dusty overhead electric bulbs revealed about what Henry had expected: an old-fashioned bedroom, flower-papered, a four-poster bed, a carved highboy with a drop-leaf desk, a case of old books, two uncomfortable "easy" chairs, hassocks, stools, tall vases, and a gas log fireplace.

"The bath," Willis said, "is the door left. It's rather out-of-date, but thoroughly practicable. We breakfast at seven. Come down the main stairs and turn left, through the door at the end of the hall, to the kitchen. You and I will take our meals in the old conservatory. Irene and Mrs. Porne eat in the kitchen. Mr. Southey will introduce you to your duties at nine, sharp."

Henry did not want to be left alone there for the balance of the evening. He knew he would not have the nerve to go back outside—he had nowhere to go, anyhow, excepting a movie—but the prospect of the stillness and the flowered walls was depressing. He had hoped that Mr. Southey would talk to him again. Now he sought for a way to keep the tall bald butler's company, at least for a little while. The humming he had heard in the afternoon was distantly audible. It gave him a small conversational resource.

"There's some sort of machinery. . . . In the building next door?"

Willis had deposited the two cartons on a sofa. "Humming? Oh, that's Mr. Paul—Mr. Southey's brother. He turns."

"Turns?" Henry repeated.

"Turns wood, sir, on a lathe. He's crippled, and it's his hobby. Sometimes he turns until quite late—nine or ten o'clock."

"Oh," Henry tried again. "Interesting people, I gather from Mr. Southey."

The butler apparently did not share Henry's desire for companionship. He replied: "Very interesting, sir. A long history. Good night."

"Good night."

SLOWLY Henry unpacked. He inspected his room and the cumbersome plumbing in his bathroom. He tried his bed. It was deep and soft. He made a mental note to ask Willis, at breakfast, for keys to the front doors. He laid out his pajamas, taking as much time as he could. The mustiness of his room seemed unbearably oppressive. He went to the window and, after considerable effort, yanked it open. As he leaned out, slowly accustomed his eyes to the murkiness, he realized he was facing one of the office buildings; its row of fourth-story windows was on a level with his own and near enough to touch with a yardstick. The offices were all dark. Down below was the wooden gate that opened on the street and, off to his right, at the end of the deep passageway, a vague area of back yard which was indecipherable in the gloom. At last he drew in his head and sought additional means of passing a long and lonely evening.

The books were for the most part novels of a vintage and variety that held no interest for him. There were a few volumes on travel and hunting. He turned on an elaborate silk-shaded bedside lamp and read for a long time. At nine-thirty, the lathe stopped humming. At ten-fifteen, two cats commenced to yowl in the rear yard of Number 12. The noise grew in volume. It was suddenly stopped by a sharp report. Henry had an idea that somebody in Number 12 had shot at the cats, but he was not certain. Toward eleven, the travel books palled and he turned out his lamp. A ghostly shimmer of light filtered into his room from the areaway between Number 12 and the business building. The soft thump and grind of buses on Fifth Avenue was dimly audible and sometimes the bleat of taxi-horns came clearly to his ears, startling him a little. Life at his new home was going to be very dull—dull, yet somehow a little bit intimidating. He went to sleep trying to decide exactly why.

His alarm woke him at six-fifteen. He poured a cold bath on himself, as there was no shower. He took twenty minutes of agile setting-up exercises in front of his window. Then he dressed and followed the butler's instructions. In the kitchen was an archetypal Irene—fiftyish, with a straying forelock of hennaed hair which she blew off her face as a preliminary to speech—an ill-shaped and short-tempered domestic. Mrs. Porne revealed herself only for a moment; she was a wraith-like creature in a black uniform that had greened with age. Henry thought she must be as old as Carrington Southey. She had hollow cheeks, wild, pale brown eyes, scattered gray hair, gnarled hands, and enormous, pure white false teeth. In addition, she wore sneakers; this accounted for the silence of her comings and goings. Henry did not like her.

Willis bade him a distant good morning and beckoned him to the "old conservatory." It was a smallish room, its dirty glass panes held rustily in old iron; it overlooked a patch of weedy yard in which the pink remnants of a fancy brick wall could be seen. On both sides towered the tall buildings, and in the rear, across a high, dilapidated fence, rose another fifteen- or twenty-story edifice. The conservatory furniture was of iron—evidently property of the garden when it had been a garden.

Willis said he had breakfasted, and seated Henry at a glass-topped table which, Henry decided, had once supported a large aquarium. There were no fish in the room now, and no flowers or potted plants. The floor was of

marble, and grimy. Henry felt faintly surprised to be served a thoroughly normal breakfast of orange juice, bacon, eggs, oatmeal and coffee.

Willis also brought a morning paper to him. Henry dallied over it until nine o'clock. Then, following the butler, he went through the kitchen, the front hall, the dark drawing-room, and into the office. Mr. Southey, in slippers and dressing-gown, was waiting for him. His smile of greeting was sleepily impersonal.

"I've been thinking the thing over," he said. "I've decided to have you classify, first. Everything." He waved his hand around the room. "Letters in one place, business separate from personal—books in another—magazines stacked by month and year—see?"

"Of course."

"Then, when you're set, we'll decide whether to work on letters first, or on accounts."

"All right." Henry looked at the room with more attention than he had on the previous day. "It'll take some time, I expect."

"Weeks," Mr. Southey agreed. "Tell Willis when you're done. He has door-keys for you, incidentally. And he'll pay your salary. The agreement, as discussed yesterday, is on the big table yonder. Signed and sealed, eh? And that should be all."

Henry had the frantic feeling that Mr. Southey was going to walk out of the room and out of Henry's life for "weeks," that throughout the whole period he would be another ghost, like Mrs. Porne—sorting old papers, alone, unnoticed, unreal. He would be lodged and fed, but he would otherwise be a sort of furnishing—one that worked. His face must have showed his deep sense of perturbation.

Mr. Southey stopped at the door. "Any questions?"

"Well—not really. I suppose I can ask any I may have through Willis?" The ponderous man nodded. "Am I to have more or less the run of the house?"

"Certainly *not*!" Mr. Southey looked indignant. "Just what you've already seen."

"Oh! Well—all right. I—I haven't met your brother—"

"You won't."

"I see."

The man filling the doorway turned to go—and turned back. "We're queer, we Southseys. Not cracked, understand, but queer. My four sisters call once a month—in the afternoon—on the tenth. They call at four P.M. I would prefer you to be out of the house. I'd meant to speak of it. Every tenth of the month you will have the afternoon and early evening to yourself. As far as my brother is concerned—" He broke off, chuckled, started to speak, considered a moment longer, and ultimately said: "I haven't spoken a word to my brother since Christmas night, in 1911."

He went away on the creaking floor boards.

HENRY spent the morning surveying the contents of the room. Besides letters and magazines, there was even second-class mail. It went back to 1915, at least, maybe farther. To classify it would be an herculean job. But Henry started. . . .

He worked diligently on Tuesday and Wednesday. He slept well. The food was good, despite Mr. Southey's opinion. He went to a movie on Wednesday night. On Thursday afternoon, although it was rainy, he left Number 12 and endeavored to pass the time "out of the house." On the strength of his job, he bought some new shirts and socks—better ones than had been his custom to wear—and he saw two more movies. He had dinner alone. He knew some people in New York—a few, even, upon whom he could call. But he felt inclined, for the present, to keep to himself. It was a purely psychological inclination—a sort of practice for the forlorn months that were building up in his future. He would "save" his acquaintances for later, he decided.

While he was having dinner it occurred to him that he had always wondered about the myriad shabby but decent-looking men who were forever eating alone in New York, riding alone on buses and walking alone on the street. He had wondered who they were. Now he knew—they were Henry Redges. He had wondered what they did. Now he knew that, also—they stacked things and filed things and got steeped in dust. He had always wondered what became of them. He could prophesy: They turned into the old bent men who went about New York by the thousand—alone.

He went back to his "home" at nine-thirty. As soon as he unlocked the second set of doors his senses notified him of a difference. He sniffed. The all-pervasive odor of mildew had been replaced by the clinging smell of cigarette-smoke. The four sisters—or one of them, at least—had been smoking in the drawing-room. Somehow, it made the house seem more livable. He went upstairs swiftly and spent a couple of hours reading magazines.

IN the morning, when he went back to work, he saw Willis cleaning up the drawing-room. The butler used a floor-lamp without a shade. It gave the room a theatrical look—throwing shadows from massive pieces of furniture and highlighting brocade upholstery and the rich tones in several family portraits. Willis spoke curtly. Henry noticed that some of the cigarettes in the butler's dustpan were gold-tipped. The sisters, Henry thought again, were more human than the brothers. He resumed his labors.

Toward lunch-time, while reaching for a haphazard stack of dusty letters on the top of a high bookcase, he accidentally dislodged a bottle of ink. The bottle hit his shoulder and its rotten cork popped out. Most of the ink was dry, but there was enough, of a muddy consistency, to spatter his shirt. He went upstairs to change; in that way he made a mute acquaintance with Ellain.

He saw her as he entered his room—saw her at once, and clearly, for at high noon the sunlight slanted down into the area-way and reflected sunlight fell brightly on Ellain's hair as she sat in a window almost opposite to his own, running a typewriter. He walked intently toward the window and stared. He realized that she was oblivious of his presence. Probably there had never been a face at his window in however long she had worked at that particular desk. Or maybe only that of Mrs. Porne.

There is an extraordinary, secret satisfaction for any male in watching a creature of the opposite sex when she thinks she is not observed. Henry made no attempt whatever to resist the temptation. He stared and absent-mindedly he unbuttoned his spattered shirt.

The girl was exceedingly pretty. The hair that so easily caught the sunshine was longish, wavy, and on the red side of bright blonde. Her profile was piquant—firm but amenable. She had a very determined but evidently a generous mouth, carefully etched with lipstick. She was transcribing from a notebook and she made a mistake. He saw her lips say, "Damn!" and her eraser go to work. That activity changed her posture and the peripheral limit of her vision. Perhaps Henry moved slightly. In any case, she suddenly turned and looked across the area-way. Henry realized that he was standing there in his cotton jersey, staring like an ape. He sank to the floor and crawled out of her range of vision. The fact that he had been so precipitate, further embarrassed him. He changed his shirt swiftly and returned to the window. The girl was typing again. Once she stopped and giggled. Henry opened his window; hers was already open.

"Sorry," he said.

She looked around, smiled fleetingly, and made as if to work again.

"Your top-notch *Peeping Tom*," Henry said, "always works in shirt-sleeves. A 'must,' for men with ambition.

Suppose there are walls to scale? Ladders to clung, on cliffs?"

"I'm working," she said.

"Yes. I apologize." He couldn't think of anything more. The girl's typewriter rattled busily. She didn't look up again. He put on his jacket and went down to the conservatory for lunch. While he ate, he thought about her. He wondered how people who didn't know anybody got to know girls like that. After his meal, he ran up the three flights of stairs to see if she was still there. She wasn't. By squinting and peering, he could also see that there was no hat or coat on the coat-tree in her cubicle. Out to lunch, evidently.

At four o'clock, he decided to look again. He ran up the stairs rapidly. She was there. He knocked on his window. She looked and smiled a little. He turned up the collar of his jacket to indicate the fact that he was thoroughly clad. She smiled again and went on working. He didn't have the nerve to try to talk to her. It occurred to him that undoubtedly she emerged from the front door of the office building at five, or half-past, every day and that nobody would arrest him if he happened to be there and happened to speak to her. Sometime, he thought, he might get up the courage.

CHAPTER THREE



COMING down to the office, he labored until six. Occasionally he whistled. When he again went up to wash away the afternoon's dust, he looked across the areaway. The office was dark. He washed, and descended the gloomy stairs. There wasn't anybody in the kitchen. There were no pots bubbling on the range. A smell of meat filled the old-fashioned room, however, Lamb, Henry thought, in the oven. He felt the nickel handle of its door and the handle was hot. He went out to the conservatory and sat down.

Nothing happened—no Willis—no Irene—nobody. He was patient by nature, and he sat until seven o'clock. Reluctantly he accepted the idea that something was the matter. There was something more or less the matter with this household, anyway. A late meal—an absent butler and cook—might not be unusual for the Southey residence. He didn't know. And he didn't know what to do.

Finally he walked back into the hall. From there he made a tour of the part of the house which was permitted to him—the drawing-room, office, halls, stairways and his own chamber. He tried it again, calling in a voice that slowly grew louder:

"Willis! Willis! Irene! Mrs. Porne! Willis!"

No answer.

Henry was upset, but not alarmed. He made up his mind to try calling Mr. Southey, and performed the circuit a third time. On the trip down from the fourth floor, he shouted the name: "Mr. Southey! Mr. Southey! Oh, Mr. Southeyyyyy!"

The house murmured with noises from the street but no human voice responded. When he reached the wide front staircase, the fringed rug was still writhing in its perpetual draft. But no one had answered him and Henry knew he had shouted loudly enough to penetrate even the closed mahogany doors along the second-floor hall. He went back to the kitchen. The meat smell was becoming a burned smell. He pulled open the oven door with his foot. Smoke rolled from it. He grabbed two pot-holders, pulled out the roasting-pan, and lifted its lid. The fat on a leg of lamb was beginning to blacken. He set it on top of the stove and went back to the conservatory.

It was not dark, but the sun had gone; layer after layer of grayness was falling into the square, weedy well of the garden. Henry thought of calling the police—then he

thought of his job. If this were merely another oddity of Number 12, Mr. Southey would surely fire him. Henry did not want that. He waited. The grayness kept intensifying. The sharp, vertical walls around the garden lost their definition. Henry switched on a lamp; a certain desperateness had crept into his thoughts, but it was a desperateness of indecision: he was concerned not with what might have happened in the house, but with what course he ought to follow. He still assumed, more or less, that there was a logical explanation—or at least one that would have suited Mr. Southey—for the disappearance of the three servants and the non-response of the master himself.

Then Henry thought of the unseen crippled brother, and of his silence. The thought gave him his first cold lingering of alarm. It was not panic, but its nature was real and frightening—frightening enough to make Henry resolve on further action. He walked through the kitchen into the hall. He was startled to find it pitch dark. He forced himself to remember the location of the switch: he groped toward it, found it, and illuminated that room.

Swiftly, then, he turned on a light in the drawing-room and one in the office, then one in the upstairs hall—from a switch on the floor below. After a moment of thought, he knocked on the sliding door across from the one that opened into the drawing-room. There was no response. He tried sliding the door. It opened on blackness. He went in and fumbled for a wall switch. A great chandelier showered light on a vast, dusty, unused library and music-room. The pianos were covered and there were muslin slips on the chairs, divans and tables. Muslin curtains concealed the bookcases.

Henry went on up to the second floor. He was aware of his fear—aware that in a comparatively short time he was going either to call the police, or to go out on the street, simply to be away from the feeling that the house was giving him. But he was not quite ready to quit. He began knocking on the hall doors and trying them. The first two were locked; the third opened. Trembling now, he fumbled about the wall for a switch and found one. This was a bedroom—Carrington Southey's, probably. A great draped bed on a dais—a life-size portrait of a woman with long ash-blonde hair. Henry had only an impression. There was nobody in the room. Its curtains were drawn tightly and there was a metal contraption in one of the windows: an air-conditioner.

LEAVING the light on, he crossed the hall. The door opposite opened; this room too was dark, but not pitch dark, like the bedroom. It fronted on the street. The curtains were up. A window was open. Faint rays filtered in from outdoors. Henry entered, stiff with fear, and his hand slithered over the wallpaper. He had a presentiment of occupancy and a sure knowledge that he was going to search no more of these formidable chambers alone. The light went on.

His first reaction was one of relief, of transient amusement. From the walls glass eyes glared at him fiercely; horns towered above heads of elk, deer, a rhino, a sheep, a goat, and a dozen African or Asiatic heads he did not recognize. This, then, was Mr. Southey's den; he'd been, at one time, a big-game hunter. Long ago, Henry thought, in the instant it took to see the heads—for the collection was battered and moth-eaten; stuffing leaked from more than one specimen. His gaze then swept the room and his relief increased. Mr. Southey was at a desk—lying forward on it—napping, as he apparently often did. Napping, Henry thought, or perhaps even dead. His heart...

Henry spoke—but was not answered. Mr. Southey's arms were folded. The window beside him was open; a breeze moved the fringe of his white hair. The desk stood at right angles to the wall; it was covered with a crimson blotter. A scrap of the blotter lay on the gray rug under Mr. Southey's chair. Henry spoke again and walked for-

ward—worriedly, but not afraid any more. He even thought that this—granted Mr. Southey were dead—was the ideal way in which to die. Peacefully, at a window—just relaxing—settling forward, dozing, and—having it done with.

Then Henry stopped. The scrap of blotter under the chair was not a blotter at all; it was blood. Henry hurried forward when he realized that. There'd been a hemorrhage, then, not a sudden, easy death. He found himself at Mr. Southey's side. He felt the cheek with the back of his hand. It was cold. He bent over to see the face. No blood on the lips. Then—

He looked at the spot on the floor. He walked around behind the dead man. In Mr. Southey's dressing-gown there was a roundish hole just beneath his shoulder-blade. A stain, like rust from a leaky orifice, spread down the gown toward the red on the rug. Henry stared at it and automatically turned toward the open window. Across the street the flat-faced brownstone houses leered back at him. A few of their windows were lighted; most of them were dark. Then, somebody laughed—in the room—behind Henry.

CHAPTER FOUR



HENRY was sick with fear. Time braked; the second held still. Henry told himself he must straighten up, move his head, and see who had laughed—though he felt he knew. It occurred to him that perhaps, in a few seconds, he would be as dead as Carrington Southey. That notion gave him a jerky vitality. He came around. In the doorway was a man in a wheel-chair; a man as big as Carrington and resembling him in that he had similar wide-set, slaty eyes and an equally broad forehead. He was not bald, however; he had black hair, a lot of it, brushed back in a turbulent pompadour, and he was not fat. A quilt covered his lifeless legs. But his chest and shoulders were enormous and his hands—oversize, like the rest of him—looked strong enough to bend iron.

Henry said hoarsely, "You're Paul Southey." It sounded and seemed absurd.

"I'm surprised my brother mentioned my name." The man shrugged. "I heard you blathering around a while ago—"

"Somebody's killed him!" Henry said.

Paul shook his head negatively and laughed again, in an easy, dry way. His eyes ran a circuit of the mounted heads and made a survey of the gray rug between him and the dead man. "No. If he's dead, it was his heart—angina. He'd had several attacks. I suppose you'd better call somebody—a doctor, possibly. That's the convention—though even a layman, and even at this distance, can tell the old fool has gone to his reward."

"He was shot," Henry answered rigidly, "through the window."

"Nonsense!" Suddenly, and rather horrifyingly, the wheel-chair shot forward. Henry could hear the dessicated skid of the wooden rims on Paul's palms as he slowed and turned behind the dead man. He saw the wound and whizzed away with the same incredible speed. Then, a second time, he rolled back across the room and looked at the corpse, turning his chair around for a thorough inspection. Finally he said, "Huh!" He leaned toward the window and inspected the night. Again with abruptness, he backed away and whirled toward the door, operating his chair with eerie speed and precision. "Might not be safe, peering out that window—don't you think? Depends on how many Southey's they were after." He laughed once more. "Call the police, Dale—er—Blake—whatever your name is."

"Henry Redge."

"Yeah. Willis told me about you."

Henry phoned from the kitchen. He was shaking. Afterward he went back to the second floor. The wheel-chair was still blocking the doorway, and Paul told him to wait downstairs. A cruise car with a siren came first. Henry conducted its two policemen to the den. They seemed more interested in the glassy-eyed heads than in the corpse, but they did not waste much time. They looked, asked a few questions of Paul, and phoned again.

In fifteen minutes there were several cars outside; Henry, on order, was sitting alone in the drawing-room. A cop guarded the hall. Henry stayed there for more than an hour—the longest hour of his life. Finally, a man he hadn't seen—a medium-sized man with dark eyes and a rather pleasant face—hurried into the room, tagged by two policemen. He wasn't wearing a uniform, and he carried a gray hat in his hand, rather awkwardly, as if he didn't know what to do with it. "I'm Swaylen," he said. "Captain Swaylen. Homicide. Gus, for heaven's sake turn on some more lights! This mausoleum is driving me bats! You're Redge? Paul Southey has told us a little about you; we can find out more. Go on from there. You're talking to cops, but you don't have to. If you want a lawyer, get one. If you're not worried by anything, you can help me by shooting the works."

Henry liked Swaylen. His grin, the luminousness of his eyes, his straight look and especially the way he toyed with his hat; dissolved some of Henry's fear of the police—a fear that almost every law-abiding man shares. "It's a good hat," Henry thought, "and he's afraid he's going to put it down somewhere and lose it." Henry had lost hats the same way.

Swaylen was gazing at him—amiably, intelligently, even searchingly—but not in a disconcerting way.

"Cigarette?" he said.

"No, thanks. I'm off 'em—have been for a year."

"Mind?"

"Of course not. I'm not worried, Captain. I don't want a lawyer." Henry noticed that one of the policemen had opened a notebook. "I haven't been here a week. I'm—I was—Carrington Southey's secretary. This is a peculiar household—"

Swaylen cocked an eyebrow. "There you have a colossal understatement!"

WITHOUT effort, Henry talked. He began with his own story—the rather colorless recital he had made to Carrington Southey on his first afternoon at Number 12. He then made a careful accounting of his duties and activities on the days between Monday and Friday. Swaylen smoked, and listened almost without interruption. When Henry stopped, he said: "Well, thank the Lord for one thing! You'll be a cinch to check!" For a moment he was silent, sucking the very short stub of his fifth or sixth cigarette. "I think everything you've told me is the truth, Redge; I'll say that. What about the papers and letters? Anything in them that might make you think somebody was gunning for that lump upstairs?"

"No." Henry thought it over. "No," he repeated; "Carrington Southey wrote some pretty nasty letters himself. Quarreled by mail with all sorts of people—big-game hunters, explorers, people he owed money to. He'd let bills run—big bills—sometimes for a couple of years. I guess rich men can do it and get away with it. But I haven't seen anything strong enough to start anybody doing any killing."

"Yeah." Captain Swaylen still looked amiable. "You know you're in a pretty tough spot, don't you?"

Henry could feel the blood leaving his face. "Me?"

"You."

"I—" Henry shook his head. "Why—no! I don't. Why?"

Swaylen pondered again. "Look: You're broke—flat—and have been for some time. You get a job. Southey contracts to pay you a grand and a quarter—you've got the contract, I suppose?"

"It's a note," Henry answered dully. "A scrawl. I get it: You figure I knocked him off for that money. I didn't."

"I didn't say I figured it. I said, half the cops in here would suspect you—*whango*—like that. Why? You're alone in the world. An easy guy to nail. You were alone in the house. Enough guns and ammunition in the joint for a small war. A grand and a quarter might look like a bonanza to you. You might even be cracked—for all we know. You're the only visible possibility, till we find the servants. Got any idea where they are?"

Henry felt sweat on his hands. "None."

"I'm not going to pull you in," Swaylen said, "unless the boss insists. Not now. You can't leave without being followed or chased back in. You better just sit tight." He rose abruptly. "If you and Paul were the only ones in the place this afternoon, it'll be tough for you. He can't go out in the street and shoot people in windows. And somebody potted Carrington from the fourth floor, across the street—beyond doubt. You haven't got any alibi for around four o'clock—"

HENRY was pretty close to panic. He made a mistake. "A girl saw me about then," he said desperately—and knew he should not have said it.

Swaylen sat down again. "*Girl?*" His tone was quiet. "What girl?"

"Skip it."

"I guess we won't." He wasn't amiable any more. "Go on. Or do you want us to ask you at the station? I mean—ask you *good?*"

It was chivalry, not personal fear, that had made Henry demur. His imagination went no further than to suggest the notion that the beautiful girl across the areaway would resent being questioned by the cops about a matter that was in no way her responsibility. It was fortunate that Henry's imagination was so limited at that instant. . . . However, he told the entire story of his slight flirtation with the copper-haired girl at the typewriter.

Swaylen stared at the young man. "And you were up in your room at four?"

"Yes. Approximately."

"That was about when—according to the M.E.—old Carrington was shot. In other words, you weren't in the office. You were roving around?"

"I went to my room—and back."

"But not across the street?"

"No. I didn't kill Carrington Southey."

"Ahl!" the Captain said, and left the room.

Henry went into the hall. Upstairs there were voices, footsteps on the rugs, and the sound of doors opening and closing. Occasionally there was an instantaneous, silent flash of light as a photographer's bulb blazed. The library door was open, and men were moving beyond it. Obviously they were combing the house. Men in uniform passed him with a curious stare. Once he heard Paul call, "Darned if I know where they keep those keys! Nobody's been in those rooms since the Year One!"

Henry was not hungry, but he felt he ought to eat. It was nearly ten o'clock. He remembered the roast, and went to the kitchen. The double pan was still sitting on the stove. He hunted around the empty room, found a paring-knife, some bread, and a plate. He cut away the burned fat on the top of the roast and detached a chunk of overdone lamb. Nervously he began to eat it, alternating a bite of meat with a bite of bread. He had been there less than five minutes when a key turned in the back porch door. Henry rose quickly.

Willis came in, as coldly composed as ever. He put the key on the inside of the door, said "Good evening" to

Henry, observed the roast, and raised his eyebrows as he hung his derby hat on a hook. Mild curiosity was on his face. "Crowd outside," he said. "Fire in the block? Where are Irene and Mrs. Porne? Gawping?"

"How'd you get around back?"

Willis scowled as if the question were unwarranted. "By the gate; it's unlocked. I always enter the premises by the gate. There was quite a crowd on the street, and I assumed there'd been a fire—or a fight. I pushed through—"

Unnoticed by the police, Henry realized. He looked at the butler with a certain malice. Willis had not put himself out in any way toward Henry. Now Henry had a method that would, at the very least, reduce Willis to a somewhat more human level.

"I wondered," Henry said slowly, biting at his hunk of lamb. "You see—while you were out, somebody murdered Carrington Southey."

Willis' lean frame wilted, inch by inch. He sat down at the kitchen table, after a while. The thought that Henry was kidding—or perhaps mistaken—visibly passed through his mind, and he looked at the younger man to make sure. His long fingers drummed on the table. "So," he said finally. "It's ended."

"What's ended?"

Willis contracted his muscles. "Never mind. Rather, let us say, the Southey household is ended. Do they know who did it?"

"They suspect I did."

Willis seemed amazed. "Really?"

"Or you."

"Or me, Mr. Redge?" The butler's Adam's apple wobbled and his eyes grew moist. "It's fantastic! After thirty years of patient, difficult service, under conditions few men would even venture to accept, they are brazen and stupid enough to suspect that I—" He broke off. With more calm, he asked, "How did it happen?"

Henry told him and asked a question in return. "Where were you?"

The butler had listened with narrowed eyes. Tiny diamonds of perspiration shone on his bald head. He was thinking hard; that much could be seen. He appeared not to have heard Henry's question, but after a moment he answered:

"I had Mr. Southey's permission—the late Mr. Southey's permission—to visit my brother, in Brooklyn, who is ill."

"Then you've got an alibi for four o'clock?"

Willis was startled. "Alibi? Four o'clock? Not exactly. My brother slept all afternoon. I spent some time in the park—two hours, perhaps. I seldom get out, you know. I enjoy the air."

"You better go tell Captain Swaylen," Henry said, and Willis nodded and left the kitchen.

CHAPTER FIVE

BUT Henry was not alone for long. There was a rather furtive knock at the back door. Irene, he thought, or Mrs. Porne. He opened the door and a light instantly blinded him. As his eyes recovered, he was aware that two men were coming into the kitchen. They were both about Henry's age and one carried a camera with a reflector attached. The other, broad, chunky and red-headed, began to talk fast:

"I'm Decey, of the New York Press. You're the secretary? We picked up the story—part of it—from our police reporter. Glad to meet you. Don't mind answering a few questions, do you?"

Henry was annoyed. "How'd you get in?"

"Through the Fenton Building, and over the fence."

"You can go out the front way, then."

"Be a good guy! We'll get it anyhow. . . . Swaylen's in charge, isn't he?"

"Yes, but—"

"Friend of mine—good friend. Look—you're probably in a hole; everybody is, when there's a fresh corpse lying around! Maybe we can help you. We're not bad eggs. I don't like busting in on you. It's the way I make my living, that's all—a bum way." He grinned.

"I'll get Captain Swaylen," Henry said.

Decey winced. "Okay. We'll go quietly."

Henry nodded. "You better. What I have to say is said—to the police." The reporter and the photographer were moving toward the door. Henry halted them. "If you want to help me, though, you might."

Decey stopped. "Any old way, son! Name it."

"You know anything about the four Southey sisters?"

"I ought to. I been around long enough"

"What?"

"Well, what do you want to know? You know 'em, don't you?"

"I never saw them—and I never heard anything about them except that there were four of them."

THE reporter stared, shook his head, and came back. "Son, we are going to get along! How come you never saw 'em?"

Henry explained that he had been on the job for a few days only. "They called on my afternoon off," he added.

The reporter grinned. "The afternoon old Carrington chased you out, I'll bet! Never mind. I took a gander at the stuff in the morgue before I left the shop. There's a barrel of it. Thirty years ago, Southey was a top name on the front page of the society section. Four sisters, all younger than—the deceased." He smirked. "All screwy. All mad at each other. They aren't young, any more, though a couple of them still think they are. Their old man, Paul Carrington Southey—mines, railroads, a ship line—left each one a decent income. What you and I, pal, would call a piece of cake, for life. But the estate was left for Carrington to manage as he saw fit. If Carrington went, Paul was to get it—and if Paul, then the oldest sister. A patriarch, the old guy! Anything over their incomes that the sisters wanted, they had to ask Carrington for it."

"I see," Henry said. That, evidently was why the sisters had called on the tenth—why they called on the tenth of every month. To "ask Carrington for it." He could imagine that the mountain of chuckling fat would enjoy the regular visits and the sense of power which the administration of the estate gave him. He could also imagine, if what the reporter said was true, that four sisters as eccentric and willful as their two brothers would produce some stupendous family fights. It was no wonder that Mr. Southey had ordered Henry to absent himself on the tenth of every month.

Decey waited for Henry to digest the information and then said: "Okay. Anything else? If not—give!"

Henry considered. The newspapers, if they wanted to make the effort, could readily ascertain the facts about himself. There was nothing secret in his life. He almost wished that there was a secret or two, merely to relieve what was going to be a humiliatingly colorless narrative. He told Decey about himself.

The husky reporter made a few notes and eyed Henry pityingly when he stopped talking. "That all?"

"I guess so."

"Brother, you've missed a lot of boats! No girls?"

Henry flushed. "No."

"You look like you weren't so sure."

"No girls. I know one or two just slightly—from the place where I worked before—"

"There's no such a thing as knowing a dame slightly, son!" Decey jerked his head toward his photographer. "Now let's barge into the front of the house, till we get thrown out."

Later, when he had finished his bread and meat, Henry went into the hall. Decey and the man with the camera were being brusquely hustled down the front staircase by a policeman. The reporter saw Henry, as he was rushed toward the door, and made an enthusiastic gesture with his thumb and forefinger circled. Henry tried to start a conversation with the policeman on guard at the door but the man wouldn't talk, so he left him apologetically and stood around in readiness for he did not know what. Nobody questioned him. Nobody even noticed him.

Shortly after eleven, he went upstairs apprehensively. There were men in the den; but they did not prevent Henry from coming inside. Captain Swaylen was making some measurements. Henry watched.

After a time, the doors downstairs banged and feet ran up the steps. A rather breathless officer in uniform hurried into the room.

"We found the shell, Captain! On the sunken pavement in front of Number 11. At least, it's a .30-caliber—"

Henry thought Swaylen had not noticed him. But now Swaylen looked straight at him and motioned him out with his thumb.

Henry asked half angrily: "Well—may I go to bed?"

The Captain grinned. "Sure. Sleep tight. If we want you, we'll call."

Henry went to his room, but not to bed. He had a feeling that, as one of the principal suspects, he was being given a thorough brush-off. But he was glad that he had not been arrested—not yet, anyway. He took off his jacket and tie and lay on his bed. Automobiles came and went on the street below. People moved in the house. Time passed. He was apprehensive. It was possible that the crime might be put at his door! He had what amounted to a motive, and he had no alibi. He had no friends, no money, no reputation. The more he thought, the more it frightened him. In a waking nightmare, he could see himself being tried in court and judged guilty, sentenced, led to the chair. . . . Maybe Swaylen was already convinced. Or maybe Swaylen was just giving him what looked like freedom in order to find out what he would do.

Henry got up, put on his tie and jacket, and went back downstairs. It was almost midnight. The drawing-room was empty, so he sat down there. He tried to think, but none of his thoughts was worth much. Finally he heard the bell ring in the kitchen and an argument at the door. He peered out into the hall.

AN old woman in a smooth dark fur coat and a sparkling evening dress was saying to the cop: "I tell you, I have a right to be here. I'm Agatha Southey, his sister. Send for your superior at once."

Henry discreetly moved back into the shadows of the drawing-room.

The policeman demurred. "Ma'am I already have orders not to let any more people in."

"Send for your superior, then, and have the orders countermanded! I'm in—and I propose to stay in!"

The cop abruptly called up the staircase: "Cap'n Swaylen! There's an old dame here—the sister. She won't take no for an answer."

Feet ran lightly, swiftly, down the carpeted steps. Henry couldn't see the Captain; but he could hear his voice. "You're—Miss Southey?"

"I'm Mrs. Oliver Gladsbey Jenks-Patton. What's this about Carrington being murdered? Paul phoned, and then the police."

"He was shot," Captain Swaylen replied, "while sitting at the desk in the window of his den—presumably from the fourth-floor window of the house across the

street. The shot killed him instantly; it penetrated his heart. The gun believed to have been used was returned to the den. We'll be sure of it in the morning, though we're pretty sure, now."

"Indeed? Who shot him?"

"I was going to ask you that."

"Humph! Any of us might have! The old fool! A maddening creature, Captain, an egomaniac! I daresay it was Beth—or perhaps Nellie. I doubt if Dora could have done it; she drinks too much—unsteady as a tumbler on a table in a diner. Taken the cure seven times that I am aware of. . . . Where are the remains?"

"Upstairs."

"Well, why do we stand about so? Are any of my sisters here?"

"You're the first."

"I daresay. I usually am. I was near by—Patterson's Rainbow Esplanade, as a matter of fact, and gambling, too—since you'll ferret it out. Mad about it. Funny—"

Her voice was fading as she moved up the staircase. "Funny?" Swaylen's tone was interested, but not too interested.

"I always thought Paul would do him in. But if you're sure he was shot from across the street, it's quite out of the question. Paul hasn't left the house since 1911. Paul's rather a dear, you know—"

The rest was lost to Henry. He decided, however, that the murky drawing-room was a good place to sit, and he made himself comfortable there.

Two more of the Southey sisters arrived within the next hour. The first was Beth. She came with her husband. The officer on guard was ready, this time.

"I'm Mr. Southey's younger sister, Mrs. Birnett," she said in a quiet, cultured voice. "This is my husband. We were notified in our home in Southampton, and hurried in from a dinner-party."

"Upstairs—front room on the right," the cop directed.

Henry bent forward. He saw the profile of a middle-aged woman with carefully dyed hair. Her husband was gaunt and looked scared. As they started up the stairs, she said without any attempt to conceal her words: "For Carrie, a natural end. I wonder which of us did it? Might even have been the servants. I dare say Carrie took good care of them. He does *those* things very decently. That old spook Mrs. Porne—"

"Dear," said her husband, "I wouldn't make such speculations!"

Nellie arrived shortly afterward. She was wearing the uniform of one of the women's service organizations—blue and gray with a great deal of gold braid. She had black hair, like Paul's, and she also possessed the deep Southey voice.

"Nasty business, Officer," she said. "The station phoned me. Caught me at a First-Aid class. Will you send up word that Mrs. Nolis is here—Colonel Nolis?"

THE cop told her to go up. Apparently she first leaned into the library. "Brrr," she said. "Grim! Always hated this tomb!" Then she appeared suddenly in the drawing-room doorway. She saw Henry. "Who are you?" she demanded.

"I'm the secretary—Mr. Southey's."

"Good man," she said heartily. "Keep stooging around. They caught the murderer yet?"

"No."

"If a Southey did it," she said placidly, "they won't. If one of you servants did, they will."

Her inclusion of him among the "servants" made Henry feel increasingly discouraged and helpless. He sat in the drawing-room for another hour and nothing more happened. Finally he went upstairs. The den was closed and voices murmured inside. He listened, but the door was too thick for eavesdropping. He went to his room.

This time he undressed. He felt shaky. He took a hot bath, half expecting to be interrupted, but no one bothered him. He began to think of the day that lay ahead. He'd have to sleep, somehow, if he could. In his luggage were the medicaments he had used during his long illness. He had not touched them for months. Now he opened the little box and shook two pills from the barbiturate bottle. He took them, doused his light, and lay down. Buses bumped and whined. His head ached; his feet were cold; he was in a jam—and he did not know what to do about it. . . . Little by little, he grew sleepy.

CHAPTER SIX



WHEN he opened his eyes and realized his surroundings, it was morning—late morning, to judge by the sunlight. He sat up and looked at his watch. Nine-fifteen! He peered at his window, mindful of the girl. Carefully, crouching low, he investigated.

Her office was empty. No hat, coat, or red-gold head bent over the typewriter. He felt even worse. A cold shower seemed only to numb him. He dressed and hurried down to the kitchen.

Willis, looking ghastly, was sitting at the kitchen table. He nodded with more warmth than he had previously shown.

"I was keeping some ham hot," he said. "I'll cook eggs. Perhaps you'd like coffee first?"

"That's darned white of you, Willis."

"I can't imagine what happened to Irene—and to Mrs. Porne." Willis set a cup on the table and poured coffee from an old-fashioned pot. "I made a suggestion, but I don't know how it was received."

Henry gratefully gulped the coffee.

"Suggestion?"

"That Mrs. Porne, while cleaning, came upon the—er—body; and that she hurried here and told Irene. Both women have been in the Southey service for nearly as many years as I—thirty-one, in my case; I am sixty-four."

"You don't look it, Willis."

"Thank you, sir. They have been here for a long time, Mr. Redge. But they never became accustomed to it. Irene is Irish and the hysterical sort. Superstitious—panicky. Mrs. Porne is very timid. They might have decided to flee—just on the spur of the moment—out of pure shock. Quite capable of such behavior, I am sure."

Henry considered. "Maybe. If so, they'll turn up."

"Oh, undoubtedly."

"You don't think that either one of them could have—"

"No."

Henry began to eat his ham. "The Southey sisters all suspect each other."

"Do they?"

Henry told about his surveillance on the night before.

"A peculiar family," the butler said. "Responsible—even fussy about responsibility and detail—in certain ways, utterly casual in others. Reckless—and willful. You are aware, perhaps, that Mr. Paul and the late Mr. Carrington communicated only through me, during all their years together here."

"Yes. But why?"

"They despised each other."

"So I gather. Why'd they live together?"

"Because," Willis said gravely, "they despised each other. Each one seemed to feel that his presence in the house was more of an injury to the other than it was a trouble. They owned the house jointly, too—share and share. It was convenient for Mr. Paul; he had to live in one place and this had always been his home. It suited Mr. Carrington too. He never went out—that is, after about 1920. Not often, anyway. Each one enjoyed think-

ing how much the other would like to have the house to himself, so to speak.

"Did they ever meet—or fight—or anything?"

"Seldom. When they met, they bowed; that was all. Mr. Paul has his lathe-shop in the cellar. That's why the kitchen is up here. It was moved, so he could work downstairs. There's an automatic elevator in the rear of the house, with stops on all floors—but nobody uses it except Mr. Paul, to go to the basement. On the tenth, when the sisters came, they usually had tea with Mr. Paul and dinner with Mr. Carrington."

"Did they always come? All of them?"

"Usually. Mr. Carrington liked to dole out the money. There are few women, Mr. Redge, who do not want more than they have—least of all, the Southey sisters. Mr. Carrington made them call once monthly. Sometimes, of course, one would be absent—one or another—occasionally for a long time. Miss Nellie, for example, spent three years in France during the last war. But they came—"

"Did he always give them the money they wanted?"

"He *never* did," Willis answered, and shrugged. "But he always gave them some. That's why they kept coming."

Henry pondered that. Nice family! The hatred and greed, the rage and frustration of all those years of struggle were stamped in the very wallpaper of Number 12 and stirred in the fringe of the balustrade. The father of those six people must either have been foolish, Henry thought, or else he had hated his children.

Willis poured a cup of coffee for himself. "I apologize for being so garrulous. But it's a relief. I had a horrible night."

"The cops?"

Willis drew a time-yellowed linen handkerchief from his pocket. He mopped his face and his bald head. "They kept persecuting me with questions until nearly four o'clock. I hardly slept, after that."

Henry nodded. He helped himself to coffee. "Who shoots cats around here—Carrington or Paul? That is—who did?"

Willis stared. "I don't know what you mean."

"At night. The first night cats yowled, and somebody shot one—or shot at 'em—and they quit."

Willis shook his head. "I couldn't say. Either would be capable of it. You've seen that collection of heads—"

"All Carrington's?"

"No. Miss Nellie shot some. Another sister bagged the Western animals. Paul accounted for the rhino, when he was a young man—before he was crippled."

"How'd he get crippled, incidentally?"

"You'll have to ask him to find out," the butler replied. "And if I were you, I wouldn't." After that, he was silent, responding to further questions with a shrug.

Henry walked to the front of the house. The hall policeman had gone but there was one on the sidewalk outdoors. A great stillness enfolded the mansion—a gnawing agony of time passing, of events occurring elsewhere, of futility and scary waiting for Henry. He went, finally, to the office. The vast, dusty piles of papers and magazines still confronted him. He started to work. Somebody, he thought, would have to arrange all those papers in any case; and it would help pass the crawling hours.

At noon he returned to the kitchen. Willis had made some lunch. He carried a tray up to "Mr. Paul's" quarters and then served Henry. After lunch, Henry worked again.

IT was about three o'clock when Willis brought an afternoon paper into the office. He handed it silently to Henry and went away.

Henry started to look for the story on the inside pages before he noticed the headline on the front page—the headline, the reference to inside photos, and the by-line: *By Andrew Decey.*

Avidly, Henry read the account in the *Press*. The appearance of his own name vaguely startled him. Decey had been fairly accurate, but the story itself was written from the "sensational" angle:

MULTI-MILLIONAIRE RECLUSE MURDERED

So the headline said. Phrases blazed into Henry's mind, illuminating it, clearing up corners of the picture. He was on the "inside," according to the *Press*, but actually he knew less than anyone! He read on:

Shot through the heart from the open window of Number 11, a vacant brownstone house across the street, its front door locked but its rear door sagging so that anybody could gain entrance. . . . Evidence, according to Captain Swaylen, that "one or more persons, tramps in all probability, had actually used the old building as an abode" . . . Gun from which bullet was discharged identified as a light sporting rifle which had hung in the gun-case in the Southey den (*see picture*). . . . Shell of death-bullet found in pile of rubble beneath fourth-floor room from which fatal shot was fired. . . . No fingerprints. . . . No arrests as yet, but District Attorney's office confident that the case will be cleared up shortly.

So they knew definitely about the bullet, gun, and shell, thought Henry. It would be easy to match them up. Any ballistics expert could do it. That meant somebody had sneaked a rifle out of the house, fired at Carrington from across the street, and *sneaked the rifle back into the house!*

HE tried to remember the afternoon. Had he heard a shot? Or a backfire? No. Would he have noticed such sounds? He usually did; he was still rather jittery from being sick and broke, and the atmosphere at Number 12 had not relieved his nervousness. He would have noticed. He was sure he would. There hadn't been any crack of a .30-caliber rifle. There hadn't been any backfire. Still, at four o'clock he was in his room and street noises were less audible there. If it had happened while he was coming up the stairs, he might easily not have heard it at all.

He read on—about the Southey's and the dead member of the family:

For more than a decade, at the turn of the century, Carrington Southey was a well-known man-about-town. His oyster-and-champagne parties at Delmonico's, Sherry's and Mouquin's were among the most colorful and exclusive affairs of the era. He was, indeed, a close rival of the famous Diamond Jim for the title of leading playboy of his times. A lover of horseflesh, a spender, an elegant beau, he never claimed the title, however; discretion always hid the glamorous sparkle of his *sub rosa* reputation. After the injury of his brother Paul, in 1911, in a carriage-race in what is now Central Park, he suddenly ceased attending public functions. So far as is known, he never again appeared in his box at the opera, first nights never saw him, and the tables at fashionable restaurants were no longer patronized by him. Dropping out of sight to such a degree that his reappearance in today's grisly tragedy is a source of amazement to those friends of his early days still living, most of whom appear to have believed that Carrington Southey had long since died.

There were references to the débutante days of the sisters—to their various marriages—to a rather scandalous divorce in which Beth had featured—and to other less dramatic events.

Henry thought for a while of the glitter that had crystallized to morbid hate in the venerable house. He turned the page to read a continuation of the narrative. Before his eyes was a two-column picture of the girl in the office across the areaway. Its caption said: *Ellain Meare, hand-*

some blonde who figured in the testimony of Southey's secretary. Furiously, tremblingly, he sought the part of the story that referred to her. It was not much:

Redge, according to his report, had gone up to his rooms on the fourth floor at about the time of the shooting, which the Medical Examiner has put at approximately four o'clock. He admits that he was conducting a window-to-window flirtation with pretty Ellain Meare, secretary to George Coxwin, vice-president of the Coxwin-Teele Importing Company. Questioned by the police on her arrival at the office this morning, Miss Meare confessed that she had "noddod and smiled" at Mr. Redge—whose windows are on a level with those of her office—but says she did not know even "his name or what he did in the shabby old house." Miss Meare, who lives with her parents at 2837 North Trenton Boulevard, refused to discuss the matter with a *Press* reporter. It is understood that she will be further questioned about the goings-on in the old mansion sometimes called "Recluse House" by residents of the neighborhood, and about the mysterious Mr. Redge.

Henry hurled the paper on the floor. To drag that girl into this business—and especially for a newspaper to drag her in—was monstrous. It was bad enough that the police should have questioned her. But the papers! He flung his copy of the *Press* on the floor. He looked at his watch: A quarter to five. He would find out one thing immediately—how much rope the police were allowing him!

Without hat or coat, he strode through the drawing-room, opened the doors and stepped out on the street. A cop looked at him curiously. Henry ran down the steps and turned right. The afternoon was warm and sunny, but melancholy—as it had been on the day of his arrival. The building next door had a high arched entry. Henry took a post just inside it and waited grimly with folded arms. The elevator-starter stared at him but said nothing. Nobody ordered him back into Number 12. Crowded cars began to bring a torrent of employees from the offices overhead. Ellain Meare appeared at five-twenty.

Henry saw her, plucked up courage, and started toward her just as another man pushed in against the crowd and hailed her. It was Decey. So Henry accosted Decey instead of the girl. He yanked the reporter around, swore at him, and hit him as hard as he could on the mouth. Decey scowled—and hit back.

For the next five minutes, Henry was unaware of what happened. A sense of stinging in his nostrils and of sharp pain in his jaw accompanied his return to consciousness. He opened his eyes squarely upon Ellain Meare. She was looking down at him with a little frown of compassion and anxiety. "Just lie there, Henry," she said. The frown was belied, then, by an equally small smile.

Henry sat up, momentarily dizzy. A male voice said, "You're okay, son!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

HENRY turned his head painfully. It was Decey. They were in the back room of a drug-store. Decey, Henry noted, was using a handkerchief to blot a bloody lip. He winked at Henry.

"I carried you in here," he said. "Your red-headed pal came along—scolding me with everything in the book. Maybe I shouldn't have popped you. But you certainly hung a good one on me! Setting-up exercises night and morning, I bet! Boy!"

"I was sore," Henry said, "because you dragged her in."

Ellain protested: "Oh, but he didn't! The police did! The reporters just came along after them—as a routine."

"Oh," Henry was beginning to think. "I only just read about it—and I was waiting for you to apologize."

The girl smiled gravely. "I know. You don't mind if I call you 'Henry'? After reading about you, I feel like an old friend."

"No." Henry was about to add that he'd rather have her call him by his first name than anything that could happen to him; but he lost his nerve. "I don't mind at all."

"Suppose," Decey said, "that we step around the corner and have a drink. Sun's well over the yardarm. And I'd like to talk to you two guys."

"I'm practically on the wagon," Henry said.

Decey grinned. "Milk, then."

THE café to which Decey led them was a quiet place with soft lights and high-backed booths. Henry ordered a Tom Collins; Ellain's presence gave him a the-hell-with-milk feeling.

At a distance of but a foot or two, Ellain Meare was even more attractive than she had seemed across the areaway: not quite so tall; shining, gray-blue eyes full of compassion and interest and some sort of incomprehensible amusement. In a way, more human and approachable; in another, more aloof. There was about her an aura of a sophisticated brand of perfume, and her blue-green dress was deftly cut. Her hat was little and jaunty, but it, too, added to her aspect of self-possession.

They waited until their Tom Collinses had been served. Then Decey said, "Anything new, son, at the mortuary parlor?"

Henry shook his head. "Nothing that I know about. I barged out just now, and somebody may come after me. I'm suspected—but how much, I can't be positive."

Ellain said: "Is all that about you in the newspaper true?"

Decey answered for Henry. "It ought to be! I wrote it." He chuckled. "Henry's a suspect, all right. I'd bet a fin there's a cop standing outside this joint right now! Swaylen hasn't got anything better. I just checked with my shop. They found the maids—"

"No kidding!" Henry said. "Where?"

"Holed up in a cold-water flat on the lower East Side. Mrs. Porne took Irene there. Seems she found the body while cleaning, and ran to the kitchen, and they both had hysterics. They dug out—and Irene tried to fortify her nerves with a little gin, about a bottleful. So Mrs. Porne tried to hide her away—and herself, too."

"Willis said they might do something like that."

The reporter shrugged. "Could be either! Carrington Southey's will fix 'em both for life, and they knew it. What about this Willis?"

Henry shook his head. "I don't know. He's been there for years—"

"All those people walled up for years!" Ellain exclaimed. "It's the most fantastic thing!"

Decey cocked a sandy eyebrow at her. "Not at all, lady! Manhattan's full of them. There were the Revere brothers—lived in a boarded-up house for twenty-one years and nobody even knew they were there. The Swenset sisters—spent twenty-six years in one hotel apartment without ever coming out or letting a maid come in. Plenty of nuts like that! The Southey's were practically extroverts, in comparison."

"I never saw Carrington—the one that's dead," she said. "But I've seen Paul a few times."

"Yeah?" Decey said casually; then he added intently: "Where?"

"In the garden, nights."

"Nights? How come?"

"Oh, I can see from my office down into a piece of the old garden. We work nights, before every quarterly check by the auditors. He must have a ramp or something from the basement, because he rolls himself out among the weeds, on the old brick walk, and sits there by himself."

The reporter shrugged. "I hoped you'd seen him in his rooms—or fighting with his sisters or Carrington—something exciting."

"Nothing exciting ever happened over in that house," she answered. "In fact, nothing at all ever happened. That is, until Henry showed up at the window in his—" "In what?"

The girl chuckled. "In his usual timid manner—and waved."

Decey looked at his watch, finished his highball, and winked at Henry. "Take her to the movies, kid! The cops won't let you get any farther than that. I got to buzz along. There's work to do, and I'm supposed to do it—or at least, keep up with it. Half the plain-clothes men in the city have been looking into the history of the four sisters. It's some history! Nellie, for instance, once lived in the apartment in Number 11 from which ratty structure Carrington was bagged. That was years ago, before the old brownstone went to rack and ruin. Dora stayed there with her for a while. Incidentally, they haven't found Dora. But they've found a lot about her. Everything she owns is in hock, and more besides. She was the wildest one, anyhow, in her day. People shouldn't kill people; calls too much attention to the family skeletons. And the Southneys were operating a boneyard."

"I hope they find Dora soon," Henry said.

Decey had risen. Before Henry could reach for his money, Decey paid the check, and overtipped, smirking. He clapped Henry's back in a brotherly fashion. "You ought to hope that, son! Because if those coppers don't nail somebody soon, they're going to take you in just to appease the newspaper readers. I don't believe you did in the old boy—though after that sock, I'm not so positive! Take care of honey, here. She thinks you're a sweetie-pie—she said so. See you later!"

They didn't look at each other for a moment. Ellain was blushing, but only a little. Henry, however, was feeble-minded with embarrassment. She smiled at him presently.

"I did say that. I have a weakness for—"

"—Weak men?"

"Henry Redge, if you ever say that about yourself again, I'll be mighty mad! I like people who get pushed around by life and keep pushing right back! Are you or are you not going to buy me one more drink and some supper? And if you haven't any money, I have!"

He grinned then. "I've got money enough. It's only a question of liberty enough."

"We'll try."

BY the time they reached their coffee, Henry felt that there hadn't been another girl like this in his life before—and wouldn't be, again. She had just the right amount of humor and sensitivity—of possessiveness and modesty—of energy and restraint—of everything! From now on, whatever happened and however foolish it might be, it was going to be Ellain. Ellain was twenty-four. She had gone to Hunter College. She had two married sisters. She liked books, canoes, symphony music on the radio, flower-gardens, swimming and dancing. It was all right with Henry.

"If I were you," she said, "I'd be scared to death."

"I am."

"You can't prove you didn't do it."

"And they can't prove I did."

"You know what I think?" She leaned forward across the table with her chin on both fists. "I think Captain Swaylen is letting you walk around and do things just to find out what you will do."

"I think the same."

"And you haven't any idea who did it?" They had discussed the murder of Carrington Southey thoroughly—between more personal topics.

"Not any; I know less than anybody about the people there."

"I'd be as nervous as a cat, in your place," she said. "In fact, your being in such a place makes me that nervous. I'd stooge around and try to do something to help myself."

"I did—a little. I eavesdropped, the first night."

"Then I'd think—and remember all I could. You might be able to remember something that happened that would have a bearing on the murder. You were there."

"All I can remember is—something that didn't happen."

Ellain was excited. "That's just as good! What?"

"Not in this case. All I can remember is, there wasn't any shot fired in our street that afternoon around four. Not that I heard."

"Oh." Her disappointment was plain. "That's not much, is it?" She took a powder compact from her bag and looked at herself. "Mr. Decey invited me to go to the movies with you tonight, but I'm going to take a rain-check. I'll see you tomorrow—if you'll look out of your window."

"I'll look. There's one thing, though: How come you seem to be so sure I—that I'm okay—that I didn't do it?"

She laughed. "You couldn't murder a person, Henry Redge, any more than you could jump over my office building. But you *are* sweet, just the same!"

Soon afterward she left him.

CHAPTER EIGHT



FEELING very much alone and at the same time strangely happy—happier, indeed, than he had been in all the time he could remember, Henry walked back to Number 12. He reached its broad, barren façade; and a chill seemed to reach out and touch him even before he unlocked the doors. He went to the kitchen to see if Willis was there, but the kitchen was empty and dark. The hall smelled moldier than ever, when he re-entered it. The balustrade, with its rippling fringe, beckoned him up to his solitary room. He went up the steps slowly; each one of them seemed to make his recollection of the dinner he had just enjoyed with the girl more remote and more difficult to recollect exactly. The door of the den was open, and a light burned in it.

Henry crossed to the door instead of turning for the next flight of stairs. There was nobody in the den. The body of Carrington Southey, of course, had been removed from the house. The room looked mused and moved-about. There were cigarette-stubs and ashes in the tray—a couple of gold-tipped stubs. At least one of the Southey sisters had been there during Henry's absence. And the police, he thought. He stood awhile in the doorway, remembering what he had seen and what had happened.

Then part of it happened again: a voice that stiffened the very roots of his nerves said, "Hello, Henry!"

He flinched and spun around. "Hello, Mr. Southey. You startled me."

The crippled man leaned back in his chair and grinned. "Sorry! Didn't mean to. I heard you come in. I guess I felt lonely. Me, in my room; you, in yours; Willis, in another—three living men entombed in this pile. Maybe you'd like to stop in at my quarters for a few minutes?"

"Of course."

The wheel-chair turned and sped down the dim distance of the hall, past the stair well, to the rear of the house. Henry followed. He had to trot to keep up. Mr. Paul turned sharply and rolled himself into a dark oblong. He switched on a light in the automatic elevator and faced himself around. Henry entered. The man in the chair pressed a button. The gates closed with a sigh. They went up one floor. Henry started helping the cripple with his chair, but Paul grunted: "I can do it!"

The third floor was one through which Henry had merely passed *en route* to and from his room. The prospect of seeing Paul Southey's chambers excited him; he expected them to be unusual, but he was not in any way prepared for what lay behind the door that the man in the chair unlocked and pushed open.

His first impression was one of lamps—hundreds of colored lamps—some glowing vividly, some palely, through shades of every shape, size, color and material. It was a huge room—made, evidently, by substituting pillars for walls straight down one side of the mansion. At one end, behind a metal screen, was a bed of great size. At the far side was an electrical fireplace. The windows were closed, apparently permanently, with heavy shutters—and here, as in Carrington's room, was a piano-sized air-conditioning apparatus, humming softly. Dozens of small gaudy rugs overlay a black carpet that covered the whole room, including a slight platform on which the bed stood. Suspended from the ceiling, crisscrossing the room, were horizontal ladders that threw multiple barred shadows upward. Henry stared and gasped.

"Go ahead," Paul murmured sardonically, "say it! Everybody does. It looks like the lamp-floor in a department store."

"I—"

"It does. Certainly it does. I like it. I made every lamp in the place. In my shop, in the basement. Why didn't I give them away? Because I have nobody to give them to. My sisters don't need 'em. And I like them. You're looking at decades of turning and polishing and staining and varnishing and gluing. Fun. All the fun that a man with nothing from the small of the back down, can have. I don't like books. I don't like music. I like wood-turning."

"It's—effective."

"That doesn't matter, either. It exists." He shot his chair to the side of the room. The second oddity of the vast room explained itself. He threw off the blanket that covered his lap. He reached for the rungs of a short, vertical ladder. He went up them hand over hand, raising his heavy thorax and his limp, emaciated limbs with a fabulous agility. From the top rung, he swung onto a horizontal ladder. He began to hurry into the fantastic chamber, his hands racing from one round to the next like inverted feet. And as he moved, he talked. "Just come along behind me, Henry, over here to the divan where we can sit. I detest that chair. Years ago I started this arrangement. Turned these ladder rungs myself and had them installed. Gives me mobility that doesn't depend on the chair. I made that, too, incidentally. Gives me exercise." Henry was following dazedly. The big man let go and dropped heavily onto a divan in front of the artificial fireplace. He arranged himself among the cushions before Henry had reached his side. "Good exercise! I'm in fine condition—what there is of me. Sit."

HENRY sat, looking at the room and the man. The room was gruesome. Paul Southey watched Henry and chuckled as he had on the night of the murder. It was a pleasant chuckle—until one listened carefully.

"I enjoy bringing people in here," Paul said after a moment, "for the shock it gives them. You lose *your* legs, and you'll do something just as crazy—if you can afford it." He smoked silently when Henry did not reply. "Swaylen—the police officer—was here again. Told me where you were. Said you'd just socked a reporter. Splendid!"

"It was foolish; he's a nice guy, really. I was just upset."

Paul laughed. "I should think so! Swaylen believes you're the hottest possibility on his list. The fool!"

"I didn't kill your brother, Mr. Southey." Henry's voice was uneasy but determined.

"I know it. One of my sisters did. Which? Which do you think?"

"I'm not acquainted with them."

"No." Paul fidgeted against his cushions. "You're not. Lucky for you. Female peacocks—pelicans—penguins—pouter pigeons—all the puffed-up birds! They're coming here later. I want you to be around for it—if you will."

"Is Captain Swaylen coming too?"

Paul frowned. "I hope not. He can—he's got a public invitation to drop in any time. But I didn't ask him." He put out his cigarette. "Do you think that Willis ass could have shot Carrie?"

"I don't know."

"Neither do I. Look, Henry, they're coming late—midnight."

"Dora, too?"

THE slate-gray eyes were sharp. "Dora? You know a lot about them, even if you haven't met them! Yes, the cops hadn't found her, but I knew where she was. Dora drinks. In her Park Avenue apartment, she's a lady. When she drinks, she goes to a decayed little hotel downtown. I think her patronage has kept it going. She uses another name. Lots of families like ours have a Dora in them. I sent a message to her this morning. Willis mailed it, special. Dora ought to be organized enough by now to make it. They'll probably see her come in. Judging from what I've observed of Swaylen, they won't take her till she leaves. I want you to be on the door tonight. Let 'em in and send 'em up; then come up yourself."

Henry found himself wondering if the prospective meeting were spontaneous and private, as it seemed to be, or a conclave arranged for a purpose by Captain Swaylen. He let that thought remain unspoken.

"All right."

"Good fellow! Bring notebooks and some pencils—just in case one of my sisters has something to say for the record."

That sounded even more like the hand of the police. "Yes. I will."

"I'm going to ask 'em a few questions," Paul continued. "It may get us an answer. But you know what I think?" He let the question hang for a moment. "I think they'll never figure out who shot Carrie—never. That's what I think." He lighted another cigarette. "It served him right, anyhow." He was silent again, staring at his legs. "You know how I got those?"

Henry shook his head slowly. He felt an increase of tension in the man on the divan—tension fed by some hidden and formidable characteristic. But Paul was smiling.

"Carrie did it," he said, "on purpose! Christmas Eve—in 1911; where the East Drive is, in Central Park." He paused. "You looked in his bedroom, the other night?"

"Yes."

"You saw that portrait of the woman?"

Henry nodded.

"We were both after her—Carrie and I. We had a lot of dash in those days. Sleighs—good horses—and there was snow that Christmas, a lot of it. Carrie came down the drive to meet me. We'd planned a race, had bet on it, for that evening—his span against mine. Mine were white and they could run like antelopes. His were bays. My groom had my horses under the trees—in the shadows—and I was out in the road when Carrie showed up. Some friends were about, but most of them were up at the finish-line. Going to be Tom and Jerries later—and fun. . . . Carrie turned his sleigh on the line and asked if I was ready. I said I was, went back to my sleigh, got under the rug, and came alongside. It was dark there. Oliphant—dead now, he was Chairman of the International Mercantile Trust—gave the starting-signal. We took off. I was behind for half a mile; then I passed him. I passed him going away—and at the first turn I lost sight of him. My horses were making the run of their lives. We rounded

the second turn—and there was a block across the road: Red lanterns. Dug-up earth. Ditch. Sewer opened up. . . I tried to turn—didn't—went over. The ground was frozen. It broke my back. They thought, all that winter, I was done for; but I got well—*this* well."

Henry sat icily. At last he said: "You mean your brother knew the road had been dug up?"

"Before I passed out—I was in a mess, I knew, but still conscious—I could see, by the light of one of those lanterns fresh runner tracks, looping off the road and around the mess."

"His?"

"He never said; I never asked. But he'd come from up there. He didn't spill after that second turn; he said later he heard my sleigh crash, and reined down. Nobody was around there to tell what he actually did. The only thing he didn't know about was—that girl in the portrait in his bedroom. She was in my sleigh, just for the hell of it—under the robes."

"I see."

"She was killed instantly," Paul said slowly. "Me—I take longer."

Henry sat there. By and by he got to his feet. "I guess—"

Paul smiled. "Sure. Go ahead. Tomorrow's papers are bound to dig out that one. I told you, so you'd understand why the sudden death of my late brother was not a source of infinite grief to me. Why, in fact, we have not spoken to each other in a very long time."

"Yes."

Henry went down the stairs. One by one, the reasons for the behavior of the Southys were being revealed. But the reasons *behind* those reasons remained grim and unfathomable. He took a post in a comfortable chair in the drawing-room. The old house whispered and creaked. Traffic rumbled on Fifth Avenue. By and by, Henry drew back the drapes of a front window and pulled up the shade. He switched out his light and sat on the deep windowsill. From the darkness, he could watch for the Southy sisters. He could also ascertain, perhaps, if the house was being guarded. It was; but the man who had the assignment was not in uniform. He was pretending to be a street-loiterer, but his permanence eventually made him conspicuous. Others passed by; he stayed.

Time crept by. Lights went out in the occupied apartments in the brownstones across the street. A few people turned into the dingy doorways, a few came out. One of them, a woman, suddenly materialized in front of the wrong brownstone—the uninhabited one, the one from which Carrington had been shot. She leaned out and retreated. She leaned again and looked for a long time at the back of the watching man. Then she risked a quick rush down the chipped front steps. Henry held his breath. She was coming toward the street-light on the other side. She passed under it, but he could not recognize her. He was on the point of running to the door with the idea of following her, when she turned again and came across the street, throwing away a cigarette. He saw it tumble white-ly in the rays of the street-light. And he realized that the woman was about to come up the steps of Number 12. He went to the door.

If was Nellie, the one who had worn a service uniform—the Colonel—the Southy sister who had lived in France. She was wearing a plain gray dress now, and her face was a matching gray. She entered the hall with no show of her previous self-assurance.

"Paul sent for me," she said rather shakily. "I'm early, by an hour. But—"

"He's upstairs, expecting you. I'll show you the way."

Nellie shook her head. "Don't bother. I know it."

She vanished on the long curved staircase. Henry waited until he heard faintly the closing of the door to Paul's

room. Then he let himself out of the house. He wanted the cigarette she had thrown away. The watching man would see him, of course. Henry was planning for that. He crossed the street and stopped at the place where her cigarette had fallen. His hands were in his jacket pockets. A key dropped from them, apparently by accident. He recovered the key and the cigarette at the same time. Then he walked toward the watcher. The man feigned not to have noticed Henry at all, but Henry spoke to him cheerfully.

"I'm going as far as the box down on the corner, to mail a letter. Want to come along?"

The man answered sheepishly: "Go ahead, bub. Only—don't go no farther."

Henry carried out the charade of mailing a letter and returned to the house, letting himself in with shaky fingers. . . . It was a gold-tipped cigarette: it had been smoked part way. It was cold—and old: limp and stained and dirty. Nellie had not been smoking when she had emerged from Number 11. And this cigarette had not made a splash of cherry-red sparks when she had thrown it away.

CHAPTER NINE



BETH arrived without her husband. She seemed frightened. Agatha stormed in, as she had on the night before. Dora came last; she was the youngest, and still a woman in late middle-age. She was thin and pale and looked tired. She had large, resigned brown eyes and a soft voice. Henry could imagine that she had been the most beautiful of the Southy sisters; any man would have appreciated that, on seeing her. Now, she was only the saddest. She ducked her head at Henry almost as if she were a scared servant: she gave her name and ran upstairs. Henry followed.

They were all present.

The family conference that followed was undoubtedly unique, even in view of the bizarre colloquies the Southys had held in the past. The four sisters took chairs facing the divan on which Paul sat: Agatha, old and huge and haughty, in an expensive purple dress; Nellie, in rather drab tweeds, but with a returning confidence and more color than when she entered the house; Beth, as big a woman as Agatha, jittery and suspicious; pale, wide-eyed, shaky Dora. To Henry's surprise, Willis was also there. They looked—not at each other; indeed, nobody had even spoken to Dora when she had come slowly into the strange room—but at Paul.

He lighted a cigarette and inhaled its smoke. "Sit, Dora. Henry, got a notebook? Write, if I say so."

Agatha said: "I'll have no record of this meeting taken, if you don't mind, Paul!"

The crippled man looked at her with amusement. "Aggie, you've been a beastly tyrant for a long time—but not now. I could pick up the phone and make one call and have you in the police station for the next twenty-four hours,—or maybe days,—and you know it. I may want notes. Is that understood?"

The old woman did not answer.

Paul looked slowly at his other sisters.

"Dora." (She flinched at her name, though he spoke calmly enough.) "You hated Carrie. He made fun of your—weakness. He was stingiest of all with you, because you were a disgrace. Did you shoot him?"

Dora swallowed. "No." The bitter light that flashed in the faces of all the Southys showed momentarily, frighteningly, in her wide brown eyes. "I only wish I'd had the nerve."

"Where were you?"

She faltered. "I was—oh, you know."

"Yes, the Regina-Torrington Arms. Can you prove it?"

She shrugged. "I was alone. I—slept—most of that day." She laughed meaninglessly. "I guess I could prove that I couldn't have gone out and done anything like shooting Carrington."

"Mm." Paul frowned distastefully. "—Beth?"

"I resent this."

"Naturally, dear. You've resented everything—for fifty-nine years."

"Very well. My husband and I were together, riding in the country. I didn't kill Carrington—I didn't detest him as much as the others—and my husband can prove where I was."

Paul smiled. "Unless there was collusion. How's his business now?"

"Since the war, excellent, thank you. And if you don't mind—" She rose.

"Sit down, Beth. And don't talk any more! Lord, what a bore you are—you and your moronic husband! —Aggie?"

"I was playing bridge—"

"Or roulette?"

The old lady tossed her head. "Roulette. At Don's place. I arrived there about four or half-past—"

"Which?"

"Heavens, I don't know! I'd been shopping on Fifth. I went over sometime around four, anyway."

"And Don's is about three blocks from here. Time enough—if you had somebody to put back the rifle."

"I didn't kill him."

Paul nodded. "—Nellie?"

"I was busy with my duties, inspecting posts, all afternoon. I was alone. I used taxis—the drivers might be found; I couldn't say. But I didn't shoot Carrie." Her voice rose a little as she added: "And I haven't been near Number 11 for years and years—ever since I lived there."

"That, at any rate," Henry said, "is not true."

BETH and Agatha gasped. All heads turned toward Henry. Paul lost some of his imperturbability. "Not true, Henry?" he murmured.

"She was in there, tonight."

Nellie was staring balefully at Henry, her fists clenched. Henry wondered if he had done the right thing to speak at that time. He said rather uncertainly: "I saw you come out."

The woman sniffed. "Very well, I did! An impulse—a silly impulse. I thought I'd like to have a look at the place myself. I started in. The front door was unlocked. It was very dark. I have a small flashlight in my pocket-book—I'm an air-raid warden—and I went up the stairs. Then, realizing how foolish it was, I gave up and came over here, early."

Paul said in a light, mocking voice: "That's bad lying, Nell."

Henry swallowed and attacked again. "You went there tonight to get something you'd left there before, and you got it; and you tried to dispose of it where it would be safe—and now I've got it."

Nellie drew a hard breath. "All right," she said; "all right—I did! I haven't slept since I heard about Carrie's death. I've been frantic. This is the truth—and I know it's going to be hard for you to believe. It's really simple. I've told myself so a thousand times. It just *looks* prejudicial." She stared defensively at the ring of faces.

Paul said, "Well?"

"On our last get-together, the tenth of this month, Thursday—it seems ages ago, doesn't it—you all remember"—she looked at her sisters—"I especially asked Carrie for more funds, for my ambulance crew. He refused. After I left—before you, remember?—I walked round and round the block. I decided to tackle Carrie again, but I couldn't get my nerve up. I stood across the street until I was exhausted. I decided to go into Number 11 to sit

down and think. I'd lived there. I went round in back—it was still faintly light—and up to my old apartment, a floor below the one from which the shot was fired. I sat down in the inglenook and stared out toward this house with feelings you can all imagine. I couldn't get up my nerve to tackle Carrie again even then—and you all can understand that, except Paul, perhaps. In a short time, I left; I went home. Then the murder happened. And I remembered I'd smoked a cigarette in that apartment: Gold-tipped, my own mixture—a perfect proof I'd been in the house. I remembered, too, that I'd ground out the cigarette against the side of the fireplace and flipped it furiously and it had bounced up. And that's what I went for; I found it on the smoke-shelf in the throat of the chimney."

Henry felt dejected. Nellie was almost certainly telling the truth. This was in character—her impeccability, routine, discipline. She was a masculine, determined woman. She would walk around the block, like a soldier. She would not hesitate to enter an old house. She would remember she had smoked, and methodically go back for her cigarette. The hope went out of Henry.

Paul was looking at him questioningly.

"I saw her come out, and throw the cigarette into the street," he assented.

There was a somewhat relaxed silence.

"Willis?" Paul finally said.

The butler cleared his throat and wiped his bald head. "I went back to my brother's. Fortunately, I have found a habitué of the park who can testify I was there at four o'clock—and before and after, for some time. Naturally, I did not—er—shoot Mr. Carrington."

Another pause. The lamps glowed. Henry fidgeted. Paul put his fingers together under his heavy chin and slowly stared from face to face. "And I," he said heavily, "can't leave the house—let alone climb steps across the street. So where are we? I, for one, don't believe Irene or Mrs. Porne killed my brother; I believe one of *you* did. Nobody seems to have a really decent alibi. Every one of you despised Carrie. The point is this: If the guilty one doesn't confess, we're going to be nasty front-page news for weeks. We've all contributed our share of blot to the family name, myself included. There's enough laundry to be washed, enough skeletons to be uncloseted, to make rich reading for a long, long while: Your marriages, Beth. Your gambling, Aggie. Your—er—weakness, Dora. I don't know what they can get on you, Nellie. You were always the most exemplary, and the dullest—excepting maybe for Beth. I suggest we draw lots, and the loser confesses."

That proposition, made casually and calmly, created a furor. Nellie protested. Beth and Aggie rose. All four of the women stormed at Paul. He sat there grinning.

"Okay! Then will the guilty one confess—and save us?"

The clamor subsided. The sisters looked at each other and at him. Paul said with a sudden iciness: "Suppose I say I know who did it."

There was absolute silence, then. Nobody moved. The strain in the room was tangible; it increased, broken when Paul yawned. "Captain Swaylen thought we might get somewhere this way. We won't, I see. I give up. Now—for heaven's sake get out of here!"

The four women united in a chattering, shrill vilification of their brother.

TEN minutes later, they had left. Henry, at Paul's insistence, was still in the room that was lighted by more than a hundred lamps. "No notes for you, Henry! No notes! I didn't ask you."

"I was grateful."

"But Swaylen thinks you're the man."

"Seriously?"

"Forewarned, Henry, is forearmed. I wanted you to know. Good night."

Henry sat in the least uncomfortable chair in his room, in front of the window, eying the wall of the office building across the arcway. He was panicky. He sat in the dark because the splashed flowers on the wallpaper and the tortured rococo furniture had seemed to writhe in the light—and the uneasy motion had interfered with his rushing thoughts.

Street noises rumbled, but the old mansion was silent. Henry wanted passionately to think. If Swaylen believed he was guilty, he was in for it; he might be arrested and even tried. Any slight accidental fact pointing to him would put him in extreme jeopardy. He had already, in the eyes of the police, a motive and the only demonstrable first-rate opportunity.

But now he had something else, something he'd never owned before: a future—a future named Ellain.

Down in the weedy yard behind Number 12, two cats yowled. Henry hardly heard them. He peered across at Ellain's office-window and thought how lovely she was and how people like himself might meet girls like that and even win their momentary maternal sympathy, only to lose them to more aggressive and successful men. People like himself, in fact, often lost girls like Ellain even *before* they won them—and certainly without the liability of a murder-charge. Henry considered the worst possibility, which was like him. What if a jury became convinced, somehow, that he had killed his new employer? What if he were imprisoned for life? He probably wouldn't be, he decided; but suppose he should be? It wouldn't matter much, he thought.

AND that thought made him furious at himself. It would matter—a great deal! It would matter because he had a future. He would fight if he had to—courts, prosecuting attorneys, juries, lawyers, and the fearful Southey's—with every bit of his will and all his brains. He would fight them because he had something extra to fight for. And when he was in the clear, he'd fight for Ellain, too. And he'd also fight like hell—just because he was Henry Redge!

He felt exhilarated. Ellain had already urged him to fight, to try to help himself. The one effective effort he had made—his recovery of Nellie's cigarette—wasn't a tenth of what he could do if he put his mind and his fury on the problem, he decided. He composed himself.

Something terrible had happened in the old house: Something that seemed simple on its face, but grew baffling upon examination. Comparatively simple to steal a rifle, smuggle it across a street, shoot a man at a window, and return the gun, wiped clean of fingerprints. Still—it was dangerous, for it was daylight; people might see—almost surely *would* see, unless you stood back from the window to fire. Was that what happened? Was what really happened anything like that, at all?

Was there a chance, for example, that Carrington had committed suicide, and that the gun had been replaced by somebody—Willis or Irene or Mrs. Porne—because of hysteria, or because of one of the myriad malices that smoldered in the household? It seemed unlikely. There were no powder-burns on Carrington's clothes. The rifle hadn't been close to him. And the bullet had been identified positively, as having been fired from one particular rifle of the many in the house. *What else could conceivably have happened?*

The cats yowled again—and suddenly, in the dark, Henry felt his flesh prickle, his hair stiffen, and his body freeze. He sat as rigidly as stone, his mind running like an electrical machine. He had an inkling, an idea, a series of related ideas: The cats—the shot at night—the shell—the carpet in the den. They flickered through his brain; when he had considered all of them, he was sure he knew the main facts about the murder, and the principal one of all—*who had done it.*

One proof, if he were wholly right, would be effective, though dangerous. But it might not be wholly right. He raced back over the fearsome mental pictures he had conjured up. Were there any other lines of possible corroboration?

One, he thought—and on it, he acted.

CHAPTER TEN

HE went down the stairs in his socks. All the lights were out. It was quiet on Paul's floor, quiet on the dead man's, quiet downstairs. The kitchen was pitch dark. There was a flashlight somewhere in it, he knew; but an object noted idly as lying about became the cause of sweaty search in the dark. Henry found it finally, and quietly unlocked the back door. He had never been on the rear porch. He moved inchmeal, to keep from knocking anything over. There was a screen door—then four steps—then the brick walk was under his feet, and he could see a little.

Above was a misty sky, hemmed by the three tall buildings and the old house. The air was rank with the smell of weeds. The howling cats detected him, a blacker spot in the black shadows, howled once sharply, and scratchily raced away. Henry moved step by step into the garden. He covered the lens of the flashlight with several folds of a handkerchief and pressed the button. It glowed dully and he could see the bricks of the walk and the weeds. Stooping low, he began to move back and forth through the desolate patch.

After many minutes, he found a large splinter of slate that had fallen from the roof. He picked it up and continued his hunt. The glowing light searched along the fence, the walls, down the once-formal paths, and through the weedy beds. Finally he stopped at a spot where the earth was bare. It was a little patch, perhaps two feet long and a foot wide, and tall burdocks had fallen over it. Henry began to dig with his slate. Most of the garden was hard, like the soil in every city; this was not. A fetid odor announced that his theory was right, so far. The cat had been there for some time. It had been shot in the shoulder: the hole still showed in the shriveled skin. And it had been cut open after its demise. Henry's light shook badly. He put it on the ground and reburied the cat. Then he switched off the light.

Reverberations of the city muttered in the echoing quadrangle. The pale walls seemed to lean in. It was very dark. He moved noiselessly toward the rear of the dank old house. He'd go up, he thought, get his shoes, and leave quietly by the front door. The man or men, watching the house could follow him if they wished. He was going to phone the police. . . . There was no new sound, but he froze. In the darkness there was a new spot of black—a moving spot—large and low, and coming toward him! He heard the bump of rubber tires on the uneven bricks. . . . His breath seemed stilled, and his muscles locked.

The voice of the crippled man had just resonance enough to override the murmurous night: "Well, Henry?"

The fear and horror and hate of the house seemed compressed in those two words. Henry looked frantically over his shoulder.

"No use," Paul said. "I've got a gun."

Henry stepped back; the wheel-chair slithered forward. "You figured something out, didn't you? How much did you figure out, Henry?"

"Stop rolling up on me! Suppose I yell?"

"Go ahead; it'll only echo around in here. On the street, it'll hardly be noticed. Another cat, they'd think. Why, Willis can't even hear me shoot those noisy cats. His room's on the front, you know."

There was the back porch, the side gate, the entrance to Paul's workshop—three ways out; and Paul was blocking all three.

"Sit down," Paul said. "I guessed you were down here; the cats, again—the howling stopped too abruptly."

Henry's knees gave. The wheel-chair rolled up beside him. He could see a faint luminosity where Paul's gray eyes were dilated in the gloom.

"Tell me why you were digging, Henry."

WHY not tell him? It would gain time to think. He would have to watch Paul's eyes and his hands; if Paul made a quick movement, he would throw himself back into the weeds. Henry licked his lips.

"You killed him."

"Did I, now?"

"You had time enough to think of a thousand ways. I don't know why you did it Friday, especially—"

"But you are sure I did it, aren't you, Henry?"

There was no answer.

"Talk, man! Go ahead. Talk! I'm pointing a gun, you know."

Henry cleared his throat. There was something odd in the way Paul had said he was pointing a gun. Something extra-emphatic. The wheel-chair came a little closer, and Henry understood: The chair—of course! He cleared his throat again, and kept watch out of the corners of his eyes—horrificed watch. To turn away would be fatal.

"I know—just about everything," Henry said. "It was easy—once one had the cat-shooting, and what you did when you first saw Carrington, and the fact of the shell being found under the window. Easy to guess that your brother was never shot by that rifle at all. The bullet from that rifle had been—stabbed into him."

Paul chuckled softly. "So that's your theory, Henry? That's why you were digging? Cats?"

"You shot cats with that rifle. And you came out here alone, nights. Ellain saw you; never mind who she is. . . . You got the bullet out of a dead cat. It had penetrated a lot of cat, so it would seem to have penetrated a man. Steel-jacketed, maybe; I don't know much about bullets. But it must have still been pointed. It merely had to have been shot from that gun into something like a person. You cleaned it then, I think. You made a spear for it—you're a good tinker, and it would be easy: A hollow tube of thin metal that just held the bullet, as a cartridge holds one. A wooden core that you could lock into place. It has to be that; it couldn't be much different. When you stabbed the thing into him, you loosened the core and used it like a plunger to tap out the bullet. The wound would be about the right kind and size. The angle could be made right for the window across the street. Even a medical examiner would believe he'd been shot. After all, they had the shell, the gun, the bullet, the place of aim, and the open window at his side. The presumption of shooting was almost—invincible."

"But not for you, Henry?" Paul's tone was mocking.

"Not for me. Your brother dozed a lot. He snored. Your room goes clear over the den; you could hear him. It was quiet in the house, too quiet. You could lean out your window and hear where he was, perhaps. Maybe he generally sat there. Willis was away, I was in the office downstairs, Mrs. Porne probably in the kitchen with Irene. Did you ride up and down to find out? And your brother was asleep; you had only to get off at his floor—and roll over to the den in that deathly silent chair. He wouldn't hear the elevator, either. Maybe you had to wait a long time for those conditions—years, even."

"I'm glad you haven't told this to anybody! You've got me half convinced, myself." Paul chuckled peculiarly.

"No, I haven't had a chance." Henry kept watching. Paul was rubbing the knobs on the ends of his chair-arm,

and leaning down—looming over Henry. "You only had to go in and roll up behind Carrington, stab him with that gadget you'd made, inject that bullet, pull out the rod and plunger—being sure not to get blood on any wrong thing—and roll back to the elevator. A minute of time, or maybe two. Violent work? You've got the shoulders for it. Only you forgot—" Henry shrugged. "Perfect crime; perfect way to kill Carrington; perfect way, also, to get your sisters in a public mess."

"What did I forget, Henry? Didn't you forget the cart-ridge across the street?"

"You could shoot that over with a slingshot, at any time. It just had to land approximately under the window, so they'd think it had been ejected there from the rifle—or maybe tossed there. A little risky, since anybody shooting in daylight would surely stand inside the room and the shell would fall on the floor, not out the window."

"But I forgot something, you said."

"Yes. You did: The marks your chair makes on the carpet. Oh, I didn't see them. You did, when you came back when I was there. I realized you'd seen them, afterward." Henry plucked a blade of grass and put it in his mouth. He returned his hands to the hard earth. "I realized you'd seen the trail—your trail—to the corpse. That's why you kept whizzing back and forth—to make so many more chair-tracks that nobody could tell about the first ones. Like the sleigh-tracks you saw in the snow that night—the ones that told you your own brother had broken your back and killed your girl—"

"Damn you!" Paul swung with all his might. Henry was expecting it; indeed he had precipitated it. Paul didn't have a gun, but the bullet-holding spear that had killed Carrington. With a new bullet in it, probably, so that when they found Henry's body, they'd have the same misleading problem. Paul kept that device in the hollow arm of his chair. Nobody would look there, ever. A slingshot, if found, could be explained. But not that.

It missed Henry by half an inch—although he had been fully prepared for it. The thrust, meeting no resistance, carried Paul over in the chair. Henry rolled frantically out of reach of the long arms. Paul crashed on his face. In a split second, Henry was on his feet: he charged to the other side of the toppled chair and caught hold of a wheel. Before Paul could roll over, Henry had yanked the chair out of his reach. Paul tried to drag himself along by snatching at the pointed edges of the bricks and the stalks of the high weeds. But Henry trundle*d* the chair farther away—across the murky quadrangle, along the walk, around the house, and down the areaway toward the unlocked gate on the street. Behind him, the rank growth threshed with the horrid energy of a ghostly impotence. Paul was searching for his weapon.

ELLAIN had a new hat especially for that supper. She looked at the big picture in the newspaper and sipped her cocktail and smiled. "I don't think it does you justice, either, Henry. Not quite."

"M'm'm. I'm that type. The dash—the vigor. But a shade more intellectual, don't you think?"

"I think you're the brightest, bravest—"

Henry blushed like a peony. "I was kidding, ma'am."

"I know. But I think that, anyhow." There was a pause. "What are you going to do now, Henry?"

"You mean right now? Or later?"

"Well—both."

"Later—say tomorrow or the day after—I'm going to go and pass a certain medical exam. I can, now. During the interim, I expect to use up some of the capital I got from the Southeys. I feel that I earned it!"

"And right now, what are you going to do?"

Henry leaned around the booth and looked. "Come over on your side of the table—" And he did.

And she did.



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